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THE TUDORS IN FIVE SENSES

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ISSUE 101 / DECEMBER 2021 / £5.50

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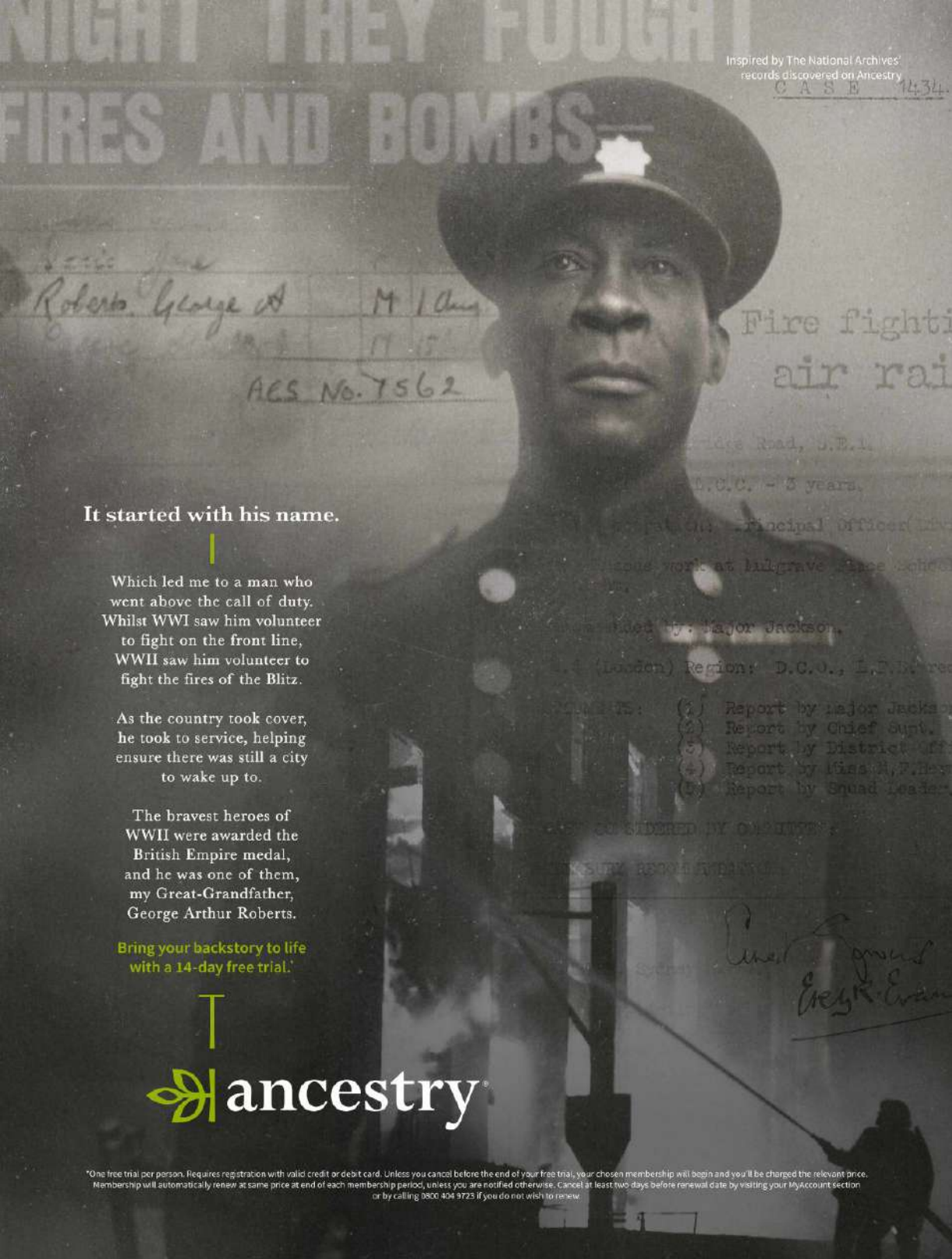

It started with his name.

Which led me to a man who went above the call of duty. Whilst WWI saw him volunteer to fight on the front line, WWII saw him volunteer to fight the fires of the Blitz.

As the country took cover, he took to service, helping ensure there was still a city to wake up to.

The bravest heroes of WWII were awarded the British Empire medal, and he was one of them, my Great-Grandfather, George Arthur Roberts.

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WELCOME DECEMBER 2021

A pirate crew shout in defiance at a Royal Navy vessel. As piracy entered its golden age, nations declared war on the seafaring criminals

Parrots, peg legs, eyepatches and, of course, a broad West Country brogue: in popular culture, no pirate worth his (or her) salt would be seen, or heard, without at least one. But how accurate are modern-day portrayals of historical pirates? In this month's essential guide, with the help of Dr Rebecca Simon, **we get to grips with the golden age of piracy**, a period in the 17th and early 18th centuries when thousands of pirates were active on the high seas, targeting ships and coastal towns across the Caribbean and beyond. Turn to page 28 to get st-arrrrrr-ted (sorry!)

Elsewhere, **we explore the amazing life of Ras Prince Monolulu**, the self-proclaimed Abyssinian prince and horse racing tipster whose flamboyant sartorial style and larger-than-life personality catapulted him to international celebrity (*page 58*).

Also in this issue, **we experience the Tudor world through the five senses** – from the pungent aromas of the home, to life without a backdrop of constant noise (*page 64*), and consider **how Germany might have looked had it not been unified in 1871** (*page 70*).

Plus, we examine **the life and works of 20th-century writer George Orwell** (*page 24*), and discover how Londoners coped with one of the most destructive air raids to hit the English capital in World War II, **an event that became known as the Second Great Fire of London** (*page 16*).

What's more, with the festive season rapidly approaching, you can learn about our fantastic Christmas subscription offers. Simply turn to page 26 for details.

Have a great month!

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

10,000
The precise number of warriors that made up the elite military unit, the Persian Immortals

40
The estimated number of cannons on Blackbeard's flagship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*

1,500
The number of hours needed to complete the 1978 board game, *The Campaign for North Africa*

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▲ Edward Low (*inset, top left*) was known for torturing his victims, but he was not alone in his cruelty

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▲ Ras Prince Monolulu became an international celebrity

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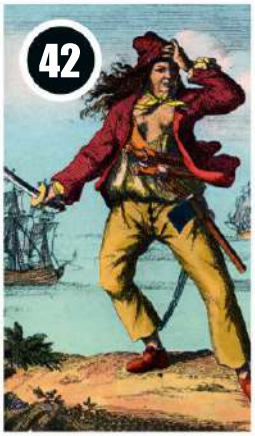
◀ With his smoking beard and fearsome reputation, Blackbeard remains one of history's most notorious pirates



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▲ Mary Read's infamy rivalled that of her male peers

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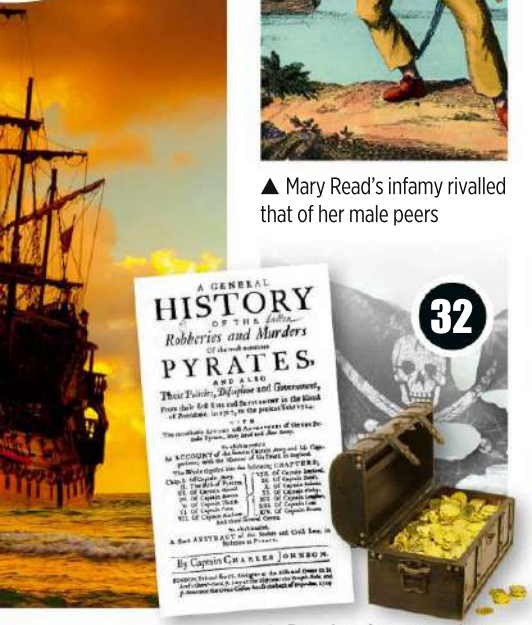

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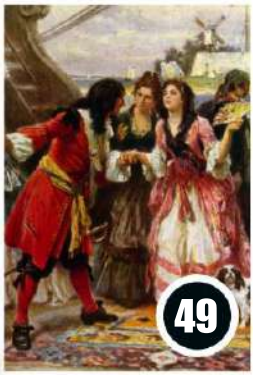
▲ Popular pirate questions answered by our expert



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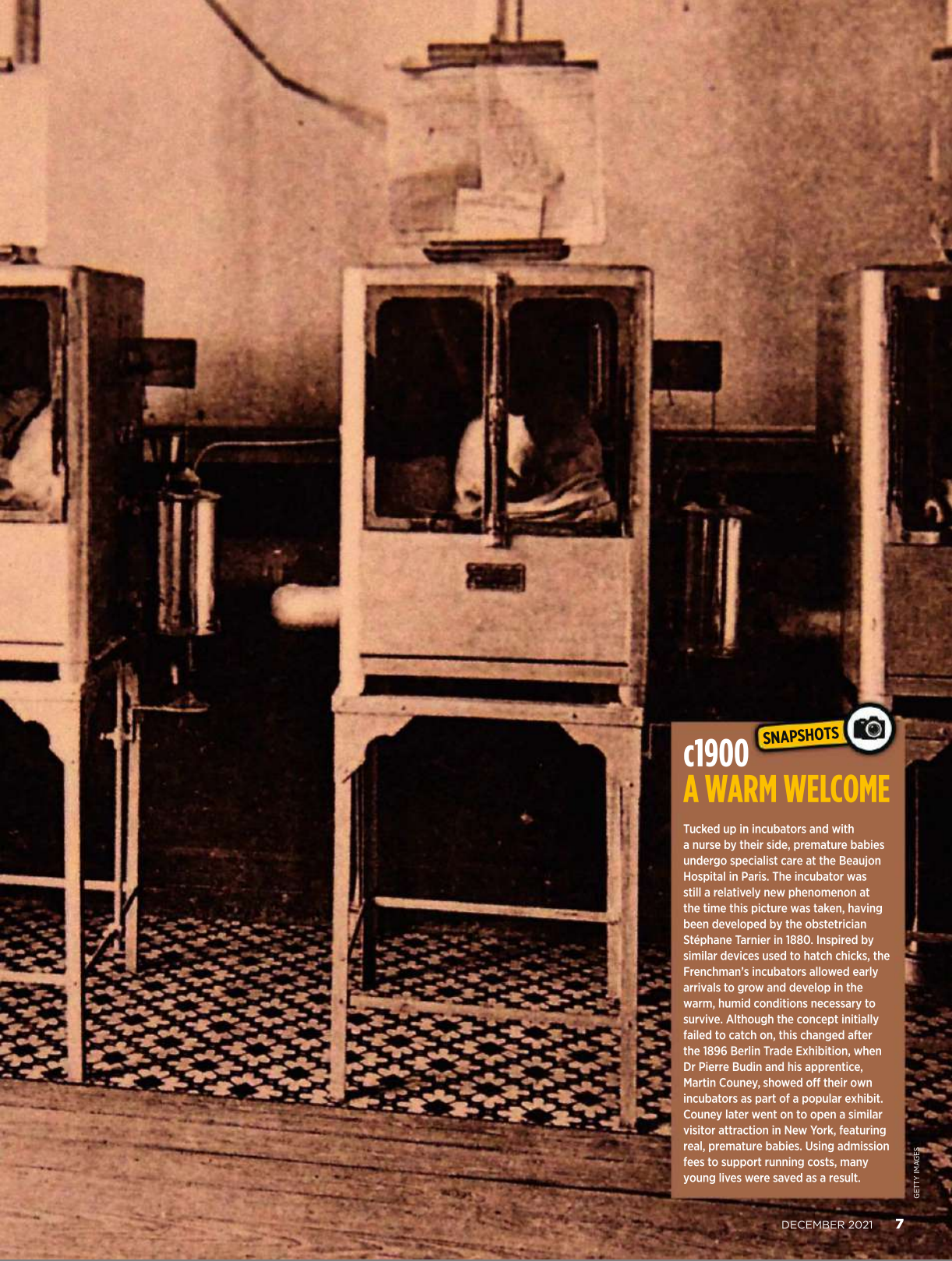


SNAPSHOTS

c1900
A WARM WELCOME

Tucked up in incubators and with a nurse by their side, premature babies undergo specialist care at the Beaujon Hospital in Paris. The incubator was still a relatively new phenomenon at the time this picture was taken, having been developed by the obstetrician Stéphane Tarnier in 1880. Inspired by similar devices used to hatch chicks, the Frenchman's incubators allowed early arrivals to grow and develop in the warm, humid conditions necessary to survive. Although the concept initially failed to catch on, this changed after the 1896 Berlin Trade Exhibition, when Dr Pierre Budin and his apprentice, Martin Couney, showed off their own incubators as part of a popular exhibit. Couney later went on to open a similar visitor attraction in New York, featuring real, premature babies. Using admission fees to support running costs, many young lives were saved as a result.

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1912
A SOMBRE FEAST

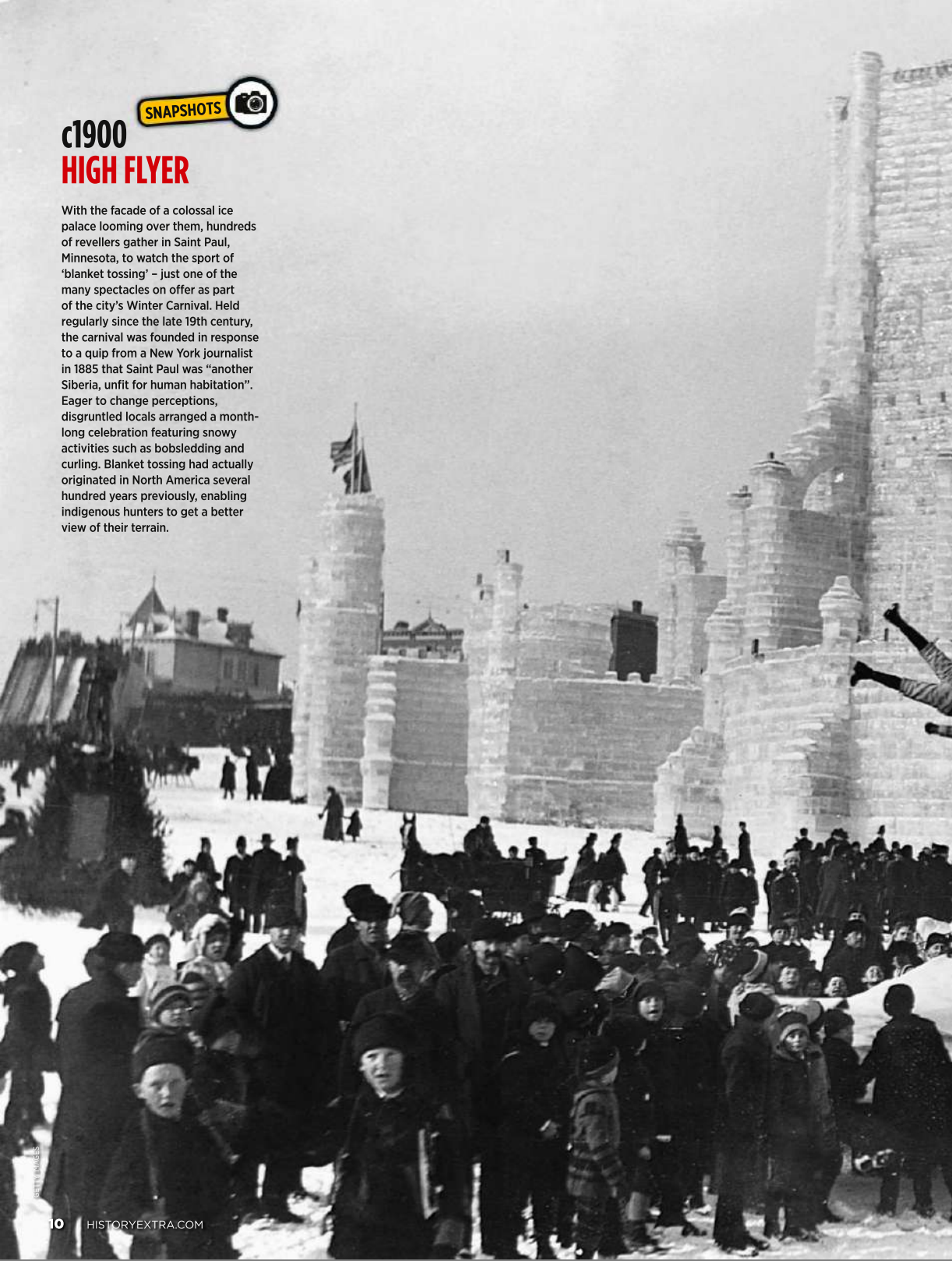
Six explorers – WW Archer, Thomas Williamson, Thomas Crean, FJ Hooper, Patrick Keohane and Dmitriy Girev (*left to right*) – hold a Midwinter Day feast at the Cape Evans base camp in British Antarctica, June 1912. The mood would have been anything but celebratory: their leader, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, had set off from the camp the previous year in the hopes of being the first man to reach the South Pole, but failed to return. In November, a search party would finally locate the bodies of Scott and two companions frozen in their tents; although the men successfully made it to their destination, they had perished on the trek back to Cape Evans. Tragically, Scott had also failed in his record attempt, with Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen beating him to the South Pole by just five weeks.

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

c1900
HIGH FLYER

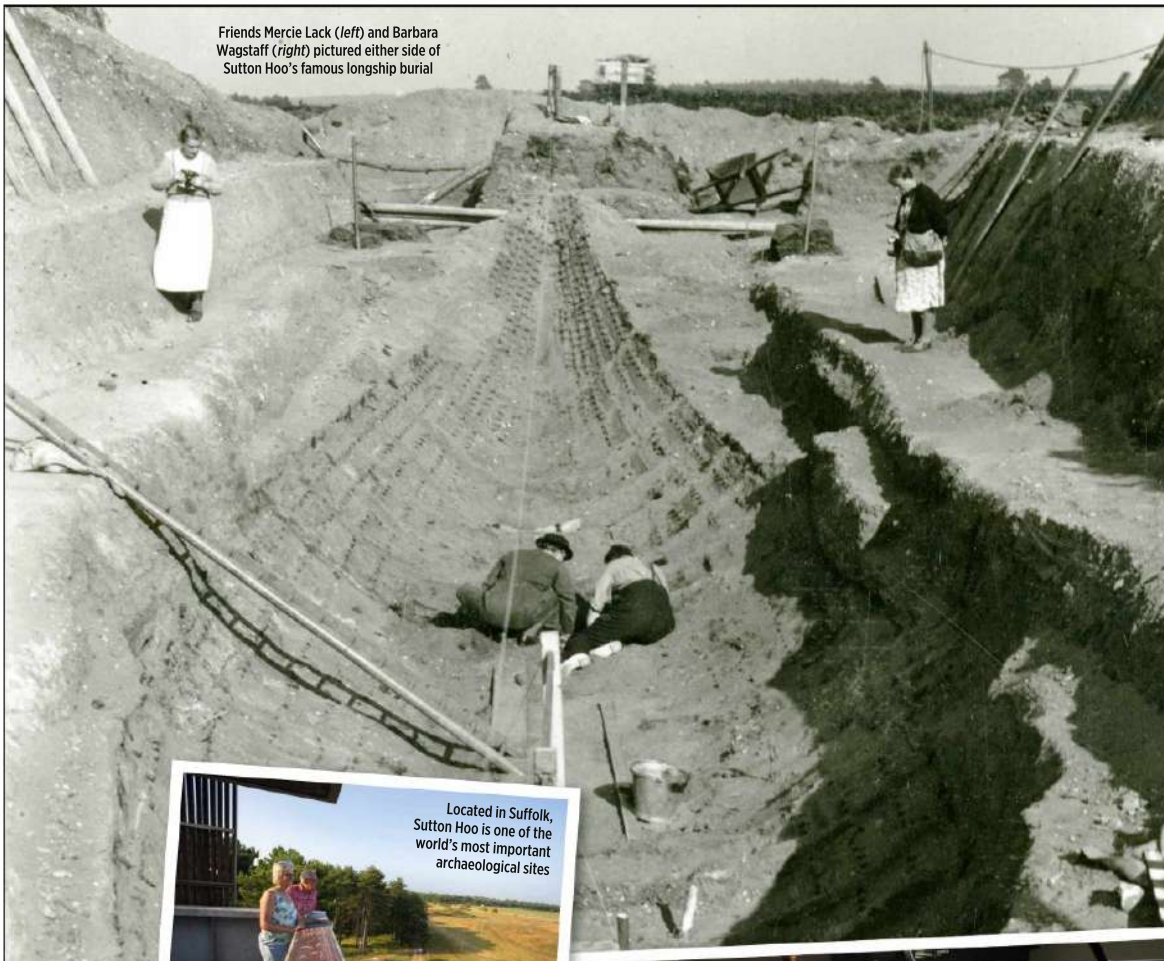
With the facade of a colossal ice palace looming over them, hundreds of revellers gather in Saint Paul, Minnesota, to watch the sport of 'blanket tossing' – just one of the many spectacles on offer as part of the city's Winter Carnival. Held regularly since the late 19th century, the carnival was founded in response to a quip from a New York journalist in 1885 that Saint Paul was "another Siberia, unfit for human habitation". Eager to change perceptions, disgruntled locals arranged a month-long celebration featuring snowy activities such as bobsledding and curling. Blanket tossing had actually originated in North America several hundred years previously, enabling indigenous hunters to get a better view of their terrain.



GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE



Friends Mercie Lack (*left*) and Barbara Wagstaff (*right*) pictured either side of Sutton Hoo's famous longship burial

Located in Suffolk, Sutton Hoo is one of the world's most important archaeological sites

Each image was carefully cleaned before being photographed multiple times

PHOTOS HIGHLIGHT UNSUNG SUTTON HOO HEROES

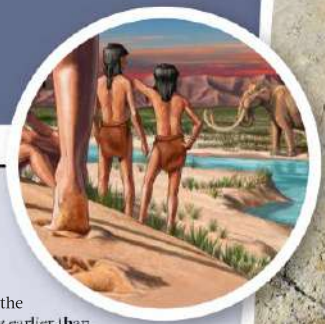
Hundreds of photographs documenting the excavation of Sutton Hoo in 1939 have been digitised and made available online for the first time. The rare pictures, captured by amateur photographers Mercie Lack and Barbara Wagstaff, were originally deposited at the Sutton Hoo visitor centre in 2009, but have now been preserved and catalogued by the National Trust for posterity. As well as shedding light on how the Anglo-Saxon burial site was unearthed, the collection also boasts the world's oldest-known colour photographs of a major archaeological dig. To view the images, as well as Lack and Wagstaff's notes, visit *nationaltrustcollections.org.uk*.

NATIONAL TRUST/PHIL MORLEY; NATIONAL TRUST/JOSH WARD; TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM; HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND; BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY X2; EMILY YUKO HALLETT, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

PIECE OF WOOD HOLDS KEY TO THE AGE OF SCOTTISH STONE CASTLE

A small piece of oak could help unlock the age of Scotland's Castle of Old Wick. The clifftop ruin, located in Caithness, is thought to be one of the nation's oldest stone castles, but little definitive information survives about its origins. However, Historic Environment Scotland says it now intends to carry out tests on a wooden fragment found inside a joist socket by using dendrochronological analysis, or tree-ring dating. This could confirm whether the castle, also known as 'The Old Man of Wick', was built in the 14th century as historians have suggested.

FOOTPRINTS COULD CHANGE STORY OF MIGRATION



Footprints found in New Mexico indicate that humans reached the Americas significantly earlier than previously thought, say researchers. Discovered on the edge of a former lake in White Sands National Park, the prints are estimated to be between 21,000 and 23,000 years old, predating the previous oldest-known evidence of human activity on the landmass by roughly seven millennia. For decades, scientists thought that the first people in the Americas were those who crossed the so-called 'Bering Land Bridge' between Siberia and Alaska during the last ice age, but this theory has long since been debunked.

MOROCCAN CAVE DISCOVERIES SHED NEW LIGHT ON EARLY CLOTHES

Humans may have started making and wearing clothes more than 120,000 years ago, claims a new study. Analysis of ancient animal bones found inside Contrebandiers Cave, Morocco, shows evidence of creatures such as sand foxes and wildcats being skinned for their fur, with other bones turned into tools to assist with the process. The study's lead author, Dr Emily Hallett, said that the advent of clothing was "[part] of the package that led to the adaptive success of humans and our ability to succeed globally and in climatically extreme regions".

53

The number of ancient Roman coins found by a pair of amateur divers off Spain's Mediterranean coast – one of the largest hoards of its kind discovered in Europe

EXECUTION BY LIONS USED IN BRITAIN?

A decorated key handle excavated in Leicester could be proof that lions were used during executions in Roman Britain. The bronze artefact, found in 2017, depicts a 'barbarian' grappling with a beast while four boys cower beneath. Although throwing criminals to lions was a form of punishment elsewhere in the Roman empire, there had previously been little evidence to suggest the same practice took place in Britain. However, the key handle's existence – coupled with the discovery of a nearby theatre, capable of hosting such killings – means it may have been more widespread.

“There is always a way around an issue – it just might not be the route you had in mind!”

ABOVE: Jane pictured with two halves of a conserved Romanesque frieze panel, which have been joined together in the Lincoln Cathedral works yard

LEFT: A laser device is used to clean the Gallery of Kings – a group of carvings above the Great West Door

FAR LEFT: One of Jane’s colleagues applies a ‘shelter coat’ to a frieze panel

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

Head of conservation at Lincoln Cathedral

Jane Cowan

HOW DID YOU BEGIN WORKING IN CONSERVATION?

At school I enjoyed art, history and archaeology, so conservation was a perfect way of bringing all those elements together. After completing a National Diploma in Conservation and Restoration of Objects at Lincoln College of Art and Design in the early 1990s, I specialised in stone, sculpture and historic buildings by doing a postgraduate course at Bournemouth University – I loved being active on site and outside. I had a summer job with the masonry team at Winchester Cathedral as a student in 1992, which was really my gateway in, then I worked as a plasterer at Shakespeare's Globe as my first full-time job.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING THE CONSERVATION OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL TODAY?

Lincoln has a 100-year conservation programme in place, so the repairs are almost never-ending! It's the only cathedral on Historic England's Buildings at Risk register, mainly due to the scale of the building and the consequent amount of work required, and the risk of those funding needs not being met. Lincoln doesn't have the large, wealthy population and high numbers of visitors such as other cathedral cities like York, so our income is smaller.

Furthermore, although there is a works department to keep the cathedral and our 82 historic properties going, we're down to half the number of staff we had before the Covid-19 pandemic. We've had to slow our works programmes down as a result, but we should be able to start building back up again over the next two to three years, all being well.

WHAT DOES AN AVERAGE DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

It's highly variable. My role covers conservation of the cathedral fabric (primarily stone) and ex-situ sculpture, so one of my primary tasks is to make sure that the rest of the conservation team can keep working on the fabric without any issues – recording, cleaning and carrying out repairs to the highest possible standards.

Jane took her first steps towards a career in conservation by studying for a diploma at Lincoln College of Art and Design

Sometimes I can be on site looking at work with the team, then back in the office writing up reports, programmes, costings and orders. There can be quite a few meetings to attend as well.

Occasionally, I still get to help out with something practical – from moving sculpture to clearing sites. Although I'm generally hands-off, I rarely seem to go home clean!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FACT ABOUT LINCOLN CATHEDRAL THAT PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW?

Lincoln is one of the best-preserved cathedrals in the country – if not *the* best-preserved! Approximately 80-90 per cent of what visitors see is Norman or medieval stone; a much higher percentage than other similar structures. This is because Lincoln limestone, quarried within a couple of miles of the cathedral (and beneath where our works department is now) is an unusually resilient material, and has therefore withstood the ravages of time. This piece of information – combined with the fact it is also more highly carved than any other cathedral – makes it a conservator's dream.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPRESSIVE PIECE OF CONSERVATION YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN?

Our current project, the conservation of the lower west front, has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. As part of a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have been able to return to conserving sculpture that hasn't been touched for a number of years. This includes the Romanesque frieze panels – some of Europe's most important 12th-century sculpture – and the wonderful Gallery of Kings, which comprises 11 life-sized statues that sit above the Great West Door. I first worked on some of these sculptures in the mid-1990s, so it's been a privilege to see the work through to its final stages.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED DURING YOUR JOB?

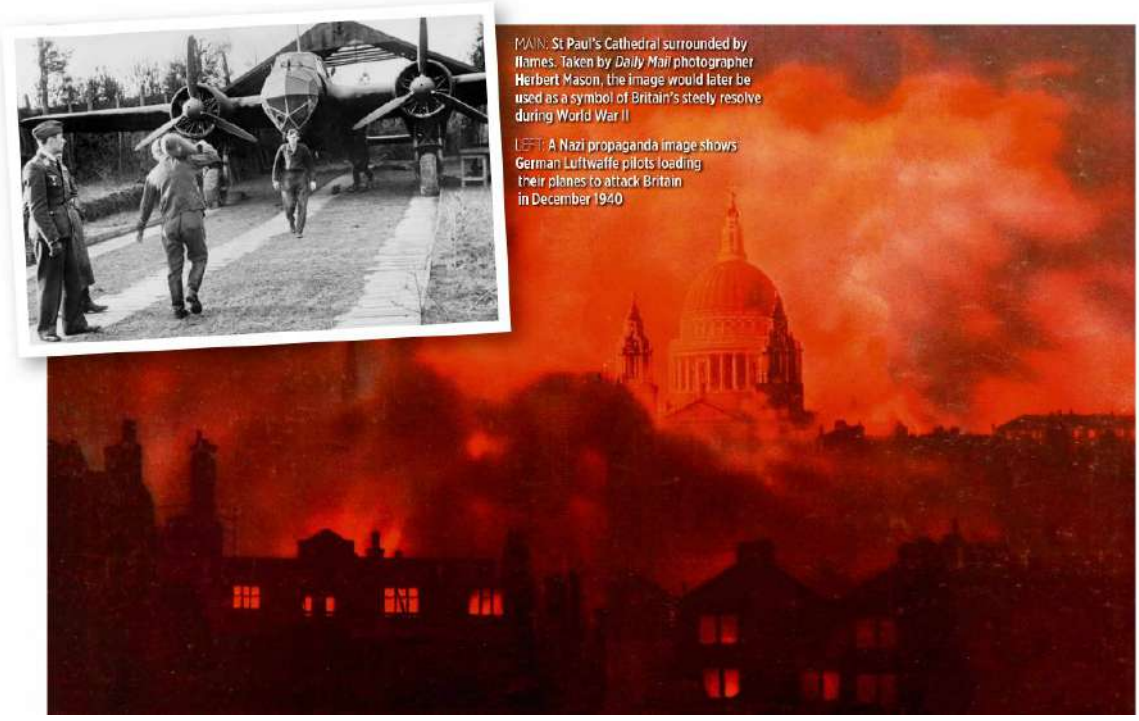
There have been no major disasters, thankfully, but there are always hiccoughs when you are undertaking practical work. Fortunately, there is always a way around an issue – it just may not be the route you originally had in mind!

Overall, you do have to be quite reactive when you are involved on a large site that also happens to be a thousand-year-old building still functioning as it was originally intended. Health and safety practices and the professionalism of many trades and craftspeople has really improved over the 30 years of my career, so incidents are few and far between. However, working both with people and the British weather means things can always be a little unpredictable...

JANE COWAN is a stone carver and head of conservation at Lincoln Cathedral. Earlier this year she was awarded with Accredited Conservator-Restorer status by the Institute of Conservation. More information about her work can be found by visiting *janecowan.co.uk*

The Second Great Fire of London

Words: Emma Slattery Williams



MAIN: St Paul's Cathedral surrounded by flames. Taken by *Daily Mail* photographer Herbert Mason, the image would later be used as a symbol of Britain's steely resolve during World War II

LEFT: A Nazi propaganda image shows German Luftwaffe pilots loading their planes to attack Britain in December 1940

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3

On the night of 29/30 December 1940, London was consumed by a massive blaze for the second time in its long and storied history. But unlike the so-called 'Great Fire' that had torn through the capital in 1666, this was no accident. Instead, the devastating inferno – far larger in scale than that seen during the 17th century – was the handiwork of the German Luftwaffe, which had been hitting Britain's cities with near-constant bombing raids since September.

Dubbed the Blitz (derived from the German word *blitzkrieg*, meaning 'lightning war'), the likes of Bristol, Coventry, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast had all fallen victim to this terrifying wave of nocturnal attacks. Yet it was London that would find itself the most frequent target – and the night of 29/30 December would prove one of the worst nights of all.

TERROR FROM ABOVE

As Christmas Day and Boxing Day came and went, there had been a brief respite from the bombings, which had by now been taking place for more than 50 consecutive nights. It was far from a normal Christmas, however, with many Londoners spending the festive season huddled in bomb shelters, preparing for the Germans' inevitable return.

And just a few days later, their predictions proved horrifyingly correct.

DID YOU KNOW?

GRIM STATISTICS

Nationally, the Blitz claimed the lives of 41,480 people between September 1940 and May 1941. The highest month for deaths was the first, with 6,968 fatalities, and the lowest was February 1941, with 859 due to poor flying weather.

> "In total, it's thought that around 100,000 bombs were dropped – more than on any other night of the Blitz"

At approximately 6pm the following Sunday, the chaos resumed as 136 Luftwaffe bombers made their way through the skies towards London. Alongside their usual arsenal of high explosives, the German aircraft also carried incendiary devices, designed to start large-scale fires rather than simply destroy their immediate targets. In total, it's thought that around 100,000 bombs were dropped – more than on any other night of the Blitz.

Before long, around 1,500 individual fires had broken out, with a few merging to form conflagrations – huge areas of fire capable of causing high levels of damage to buildings. One such blaze stretched all the way from Islington to St Paul's Churchyard (a distance of around two miles), while the warehouses and wharves of Southwark – as well as other centres of Thames shipping – were also largely destroyed.

Alongside these blows to British trade and industry, destruction was also wrought on places of profound cultural and historical significance. Five million books were lost in the publishing houses around Paternoster Row and Ave Maria Lane, while many old churches – including eight designed by Sir Christopher Wren – were wrecked. St Bride's on Fleet Street, for instance, was completely gutted, with just its outer walls and looming spire left remaining. Perhaps the only fortunate consequence was that when the church was being rebuilt during the 1950s, excavations unearthed a series of rare Roman remains, as well as hundreds of graves from the Great Plague of 1665.

However, the building of utmost concern was Wren's masterpiece, St Paul's Cathedral, which had actually been built following the loss of its predecessor during the original Great Fire. Fearing that it could be in real danger, a group of volunteers known as the St Paul's Watch (founded during the Zeppelin raids of World War I) had been resurrected at the start of the Blitz, tasked with keeping it safe once more.

ABOVE: **A British family celebrates Christmas 1940 in their bomb shelter. Above ground, the scenes in many towns and cities would have been anything but festive**

TOP LEFT: **The City of London Guildhall is a heap of rubble and ruins following the deadly raid of 29/30 December 1940**

TOP RIGHT: **Paternoster Row was also largely destroyed by the fires. It had long been the centre of the city's publishing industry**

BOTTOM RIGHT: **British prime minister Winston Churchill surveys some of the worst damage on 31 December**

Fortunately, on the night of 29 December, the Watch did just that, helping to extinguish an incendiary bomb that crashed through the cathedral's iconic white dome – and fulfilling a plea from Prime Minister Winston Churchill that the building "must be saved at all costs". Remarkably, the cathedral would stand tall for the remainder of the war, while most of its neighbours lay in ruins.

TAMING THE FLAMES

With the blaze growing in intensity, firefighters battled throughout the night to keep the flames under control and halt their spread, working valiantly to save as many of the city's buildings as possible. Steel water towers, some 100 feet tall, were deployed, as well as pumping equipment to try and quell the inferno.

Mother Nature didn't help matters, though – strong winds only served to fan the flames, and with the River Thames at low tide, firefighters also had to wade across the mudflats to source water from further away. Hundreds of personnel were affected by smoke inhalation, burns and eye problems, while 14 tragically lost their lives – either from exploding bombs or collapsing buildings.

The following morning, London was still smouldering as troops moved in to help clear the wreckage, using ▶

LEFT: **The church of All Hallows-by-the-Tower, perhaps the oldest in the City of London, was gutted by the aerial bombings**

ABOVE: **A damaged memorial to Lord Nelson inside the City of London Guildhall**

◀ dynamite to remove any unsafe structures blocking the way. Rubble littered the streets, water mains were flooded, and residents wandered around in a daze, trying to comprehend what had happened the night before. In addition to the 14 fallen firefighters, more than 150 civilians were also killed, with many more gravely injured and left mourning the loss of their homes and businesses.

A photograph of St Paul's Cathedral – standing resolute among the flames – was published on the front page of the *Daily Mail* on 31 December. While Nazi propaganda outlets used the image to boast about the success of their attacks, in Britain it became a symbol of hope and perseverance during the adversity of war.

The Blitz ended in May 1941, and only occasional bombing raids (both on London and other British towns and cities) followed; instead, Adolf Hitler and the German war machine turned their attentions and resources towards the Soviet Union.

But, as Londoners sought to rebuild their lives, painful memories of that night in December 1940 would loom large for decades to come. ⊙

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

A LOOK BACK AT THREE OTHER EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN DECEMBER THROUGHOUT HISTORY

28 December 1065

THE FIRST WESTMINSTER ABBEY IS CONSECRATED

Despite being too ill attend the ceremony, Edward the Confessor's London church, built in honour of St Peter, is consecrated. Known as the 'West Minster' to distinguish it from St Paul's Cathedral to the east, it becomes the sickly king's burial place nine days later. In 1245, Henry III begins rebuilding the church in a Gothic style – it stands today as Westminster Abbey (*pictured*).

8 December 1660

WOMEN ARE ALLOWED ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

After the restoration of Charles II to the throne, the ban on women acting on stage is lifted. Margaret Hughes (*pictured*) is often credited as the first female performer to tread the boards in an English theatre, playing Desdemona in *Othello*.

3 December 1989

THE COLD WAR FINALLY THAWS

On a passenger liner anchored off the coast of Malta, at Marsaxlokk, US president George HW Bush (*left*) and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (*right*) shake hands and formally declare the end of the Cold War. The historic meeting takes place just a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1

BBC Radio's **Danny Robins** reveals how the story of a seemingly innocent spook took on a sinister new dimension amid the racial tensions of 1970s Britain

Tyronne, a Walthamstow resident, claimed to have been visited by the ghost of an elderly woman that later went on to terrorise Asian families

Historian AbdulMaalik Tailor (*above*) was able to provide Tyronne (*left*) with more context about Muslim ghost stories

It's the 1970s, inside a terraced house in Walthamstow, East London, and Tyronne's sister is saying odd things: "She started talking about the Blitz, Hitler, rationing. It disturbed my mum, because it was coming out of a two-year-old!"

Then, one day, Tyronne's mum walks into the kitchen and sees a little old lady by the sink. She says a shocked "hello", the woman says "hello" back, and then… disappears!

Tyronne's in his forties now. We're standing outside his childhood home, as he tells me about "the old lady", who, after that initial appearance, appeared "practically every day". Had she lived there in the past? What worried Tyronne's mum was that he and his sister seemed to be chatting to the ghost on their own. Those stories of the Blitz had to be coming from somewhere, so she took the step of calling a priest. "He told the lady she was free to remain," says Tyronne. "But to just leave the children alone!"

So far, so creepy, but things got worse when the family moved out a year or so later. They started getting reports from their old neighbours saying that whoever moved into the house never stayed long. The old lady had got nasty! But then things took a disturbing turn: the neighbours reported that the families being chased out of the house were all of Indian and Pakistani origin. So was the old lady actually a racist?

EAST MEETS EAST

This story feels personal to me as I've lived in Walthamstow for the last decade. In Old English, 'Walthamstow' means 'Welcome Place', and over the years, people from all over the world have made it home. Sadly, that diversity hasn't been celebrated by all – back in the 1970s and 80s, there were protests in the streets by the far-right National Front.

Speaking to AbdulMaalik Tailor, an expert in British Muslim history, I get a first-hand account of what Asian immigrants faced. "It was a tough time," he says, recalling the abuse and the shocking ordeal of having petrol and lit matches put through your letterbox. He gives me an interesting perspective on how Muslim families might have viewed 'the old lady', perhaps thinking of her as a *djinn* – an Islamic term for a spirit or demon that attaches themselves to a place.

Overall, I'm fascinated by this blending of Eastern supernatural tradition with an East London ghost story. But was it true? Could there have really been a ghost who discriminated against Asian families?

I decide to delve into the local history archives, checking who lived in the house before and seeing whether one of the residents was an old lady who died in the 1940s.

But what I actually discover is a shock – a big shock. Looking at the electoral register, I see that the house did not actually change hands as often as Tyronne's neighbours claimed, and there were no inhabitants from an Asian background whatsoever. In fact, it appears to have been a family ghost story that became an urban myth in the hands of the local community. The old lady morphed into some kind of manifestation of all the racial tensions in the area – a folk demon.

It's a lesson in never taking any ghost story for granted. If she did exist, maybe she really *was* just a lonely old lady, wondering why Tyronne's family were in her house…

DANNY ROBINS is a writer, broadcaster and journalist. He is the presenter of the BBC Radio 4 podcasts *The Battersea Poltergeist* and *Uncanny*, available now on BBC Sounds

LISTEN
Danny's investigation into the 'racist ghost' features in the second episode of his Panoply Network series *Haunted*, available on all major podcast platforms

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The Persian Immortals

Words: Nige Tassell

WHO WERE THE PERSIAN IMMORTALS?

The Persian Immortals were an elite military unit in operation for around two centuries, almost the entire lifespan of the Achaemenid empire, which ran from 550 BC until 330 BC. Ten thousand-strong, the Immortals represented the absolute cream of the empire's troops and operated as both the emperor's guard and part of the standing army.

Founded by Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenid empire covered a vast territory across western Asia. From his base in the southwestern corner of the Iranian plateau, Cyrus conquered several regions – including the Median and Babylonian empires, and the kingdom of Lydia. In doing so, he created what would – under the later rule of Xerxes I, who himself conquered much of northern and central Greece – become the largest empire in history in terms of population, stretching from the Indus Valley in the east to the Balkans in the west.

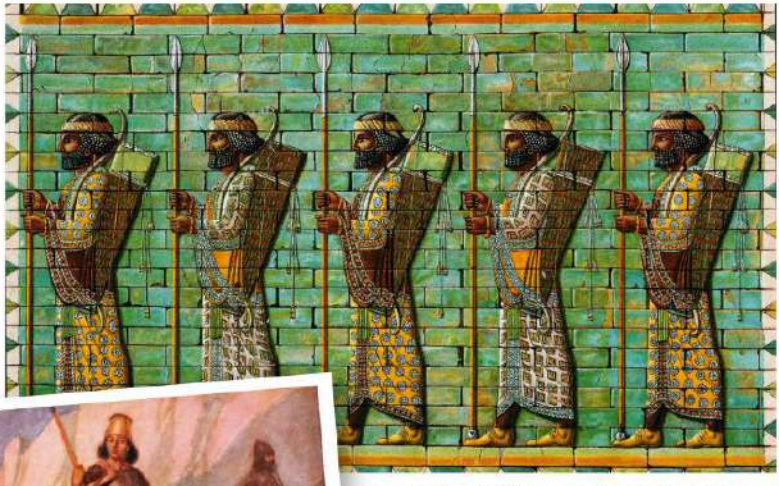
WHEN WERE THEY FIRST ESTABLISHED?

The Immortals are understood to have been originally assembled following the capture of Babylon in 539 BC. The female commander Pantea Arteshbod, believed to have been appointed to govern Babylon under Cyrus' rule, is thought to have been the architect of the Immortals, establishing them as an elite guard. A counter claim comes from Xenophon, who – in *Cyropaedia*, his partly fictional biography of Cyrus – declares that it was Cyrus himself who constructed a palace guard from the most fearsome soldiers in his standing army, the *spada*.

HOW WERE THEY CHOSEN?

The Immortals largely consisted of Persians, although a fair smattering of Medes and Elamites were assimilated into their ranks, their mere presence showing that Cyrus was unafraid to give his former enemies positions of high responsibility. With the *spada* required to provide their own military equipment, they – and thus the Immortals too – represented the wealthier portion of Achaemenid society.

Young boys were trained from the age of five to become members of the *spada*, being taught how to ride horses, fire arrows, hunt and live off the land. They became soldiers at the age of 20 and, after a life that almost certainly saw plenty of conflict, were allowed to retire when they reached 50, whereupon they were granted a pension and land rights. The very best soldiers in terms of combat ability and character – believed to be around the top tenth of the *spada* – were anointed as Immortals.



MAIN: **Immortal guards shown on a frieze from the palace of Darius the Great (c550–486 BC)**

ABOVE LEFT: **The unit was assembled during the reign of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid empire**

ABOVE RIGHT: **An illustration imagines Cyrus' capture of Babylon in 539 BC**

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X2

WHERE DID THEIR NAME COME FROM?

According to the historian Herodotus, the Immortals were precisely 10,000 strong, and it's the maintenance of this number that led to their name. Every ▶

time an Immortal was killed, seriously wounded, taken ill or retired, they were immediately replaced, thus making them appear unstoppable. They also instantly removed their dead from the battlefield. With no corpses on show to their enemies, the practice offered the illusion that these much-eulogised soldiers were not mere mortals.

WHAT WEAPONS DID THE IMMORTALS CARRY?

The main weapon used by the Immortals was a spear – six feet long and boasting a seriously sharp spearhead. On the other end of the spear was a counterbalance that, when used as a blunt weapon to strike an enemy soldier, could be just as deadly. The counterbalances took the shape of fruit; the most prestigious was apple-shaped, as this denoted its owner to be one of the 1,000 most elite members of the Immortals. These bodyguards of the emperor were known as 'apple-bearers' and their spears were longer, too. The Immortals also carried a number of small weapons, including a *sagaris* – a battle-axe that was light enough to be used one-handed.

WHAT DID THEY WEAR?

As far as it's known, the Immortals didn't pay too much attention to headwear. They wore 'tiaras', which took differing forms according to various accounts. Sometimes these tiaras are described as felt caps, which covered the face and kept wind and dirt at bay; at other times, the headgear is said to have been merely a headdress made of cloth. Their body armour consisted of overlapping plates of bronze and iron, protection that looked not unlike the scales of a fish. They also carried hefty, leather-covered shields of wicker and wood.

The Immortals' infantry would march in support of the archers who took the front in battle, with cavalry at the side. With the skies dark and thousands of arrows in flight, they would have looked a fearsome sight. With the Immortals' breastplates flashing in the sunlight, many cities simply surrendered when they first saw them approach.

JUST HOW ELITE WAS THIS ELITE BAND?

Evidence of the high regard in which the Immortals were held in comes from another observation from Herodotus. His writings report that not only were these 10,000 men "conspicuous for the huge amount of gold they wore about their persons", but they also indulged when it came to their lifestyles. Herodotus explains that, whenever the Immortals were travelling, "they also brought covered wagons for their concubines, sizeable and well-equipped retinues of slaves, and their own personal provisions, separate from those of the other soldiers, transported by camels and yoke-animals".

HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE THEY AS A FIGHTING UNIT?

After Cyrus' death in 530 BC, the Immortals were retained by his successors across the lifespan of the Achaemenid empire, including his son Cambyses II (who conquered Egypt) and Darius the Great. It is widely assumed that Darius deployed his elite brigade when he invaded Greece, but the Immortals' presence couldn't stop his defeat at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC.

INSET: **A Persian guard depicted on a relief from Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid empire**

MAIN: **The Immortals were unable to prevent Darius the Great's watershed defeat at Marathon in 490 BC**

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3

ABOVE LEFT: **Xerxes I and his army invaded Greece in 480 BC, where they encountered tough Spartan resistance**

ABOVE RIGHT: **The battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC marked the end of the Achaemenid empire – but not the Immortals**

The battle that the Immortals have been most identified with came 10 years after Marathon, following Xerxes I's widescale invasion of Greece in retaliation for his predecessor's defeat. At the pass of Thermopylae, Xerxes' regular troops – mainly consisting of Medes and Cissians – encountered stiff resistance from the outnumbered Spartans. Spartan general Leonidas I had galvanised his modest 300-strong Spartan elite force to the extent that they didn't just repel Xerxes' men, but forced them back. Xerxes' plan B was to send his Immortals in against the pugnacious Spartans. As Herodotus chronicled, "it was expected that they would easily finish the job, but when they came to engage the Greeks, they were no more successful than the Medes had been".

Their inferior weaponry was quite probably the reason why they hadn't cut through the comparatively light Spartan ranks. As Cyrus made territorial gains to expand his empire, those he faced used the same weapons and wore the same armour as his own troops, meaning the superior fighting skills of the Persians were the deciding factor. By the time of Xerxes' rule, though, the Spartans boasted more advanced weaponry and protection, as the emperor would discover again at other focal points of his invasion of Greece, in particular at the battle of Plataea in 479 BC.

"With the skies dark and thousands of arrows in flight, the Immortals would have looked a fearsome sight"

HOW LONG DID THE IMMORTALS LAST AS A UNIT?

Despite their notable defeats, the Immortals would stay in operation as the elite unit throughout the remainder of the Achaemenid empire – all the way until the battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC, when they came up against the Macedonian forces of Alexander the Great. The Achaemenid defeat to Alexander signalled the end of that particular empire – but it wasn't necessarily the end of the Immortals.

An 1814 painting imagines Sparta's King Leonidas I before his heroic fight against the Immortals at the battle of Thermopylae

Alexander was a deep admirer of Cyrus and chose to retain an elite force of Persian soldiers as part of the protective shield surrounding his courtroom. The author Polyaenus would later write of "10,000 Persians, the handsomest and tallest of them, adorned with Persian decorations and all carrying short swords". After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was divided four ways. The portion of his empire that covered central Asia and Mesopotamia was handed to Seleucus I who established the Seleucid empire, but it remains unclear whether he maintained the tradition of having this elite band of fighting men offering an imperial guard.

But the influence of the Immortals didn't die when they disbanded. When the Sasanian empire – the last-ever Persian imperial dynasty before Muslim control of the region in the 7th century – was established in AD 224, it too instituted a system of elite soldiers, also known as the Immortals.

WATCH

BBC FOUR The rule of Cyrus the Great is discussed in the three-part BBC Four series *Art of Persia*: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000k48j*

George Orwell's visions of dystopia

The author made a host of terms ubiquitous, from Big Brother to Room 101, and his very name now evokes images of totalitarian regimes. But how was Orwell's work shaped by his own experiences of war and oppression?

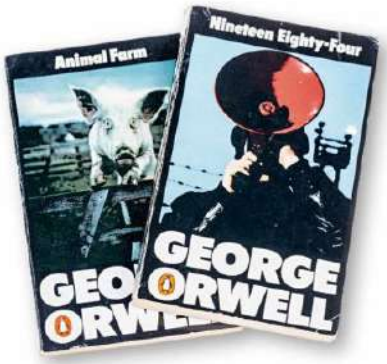
Anyone wishing to know George Orwell better need only leaf through the masterpieces of literature he left behind. The plight of poverty exposed in *Down and Out in Paris and London* was his own; his contempt for communism saw the Russian Revolution turned into a barnyard drama in *Animal Farm*; and the haunting pictures of a dystopian future in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had been painted as his warning of totalitarianism. Orwell loathed imperialism, rejected a bourgeois lifestyle, and longed – even fought – for socialist revolution. And that is all there in painfully personal detail on the pages of his works.

Born Eric Arthur Blair on 25 June 1903, he lived first in Bengal, India, where his father worked as a colonial civil servant, then England with his mother and two sisters. His family, as he put it, was "upper-middle class without money". While clearly intelligent, Blair didn't enjoy boarding school and, despite winning a scholarship to Eton, neglected his education. Although, one of his teachers may have had an undue influence: Aldous Huxley, author of the seminal dystopian novel, *Brave New World*.

Instead of university, Blair bucked the trend for graduating Etonians and headed, in 1922, to the colony of Burma (now Myanmar) to join the Indian Imperial Police. While he liked the place and people, he grew ashamed of colonial oppression there. The inequality meted out by the British fuelled the flames of his socialist politics and by 1927, had driven him away. He returned to England and ultimately resigned his commission.

JOURNALS AND JOURNEYS

Instead, what Blair really wanted to do was be a writer. He would ultimately go on to pour out his disdain at his experiences in Burma several times, in the novel *Burmese Days* and essays *A Hanging* and *Shooting an Elephant*, but first he turned his attention to the poorest closer to home. To explore this world, and perhaps assuage his own guilt, Blair lived in a rough area of London's East End and the slums of Paris, working menial jobs and journeying with vagrants. The record of these experiences became *Down and Out in Paris and London*, published in 1933.



Animal Farm (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are often ranked as being among the greatest novels of all time

For his pen name, he chose George Orwell, after the River Orwell in Suffolk and Britain's King George V for a splash of patriotism. From then on, he became known as Eric Blair far less with each publication, even among friends, and more as George Orwell. He simultaneously grew more political. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), he recorded his time among poor miners in the north of England and dedicated the whole second half of the book to stress how a socialist system could improve their lot.

By the time that was in print Orwell was already fighting his next cause. In late 1936, six months after getting married, he travelled to Spain to take up arms against Franco's Nationalists. It did not go as hoped: he almost died after being shot in the neck and was forced to flee the country when the Soviet-backed communists turned on their Republican comrades. As expounded in his account *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), the experience gave Orwell a lifelong dread of communism. And this would only intensify as World War II broke out.

Poor health denied Orwell the chance to sign up, but he joined the Home Guard and got a job for the BBC working on propaganda pieces to be broadcast in India. He also started writing regularly for the weekly socialist paper, *Tribune* – directed by MP and eventual NHS founder Aneurin Bevan – and penned reviews and essays, reported on the war, and began work on a new book. It was while in Paris as a war correspondent in the aftermath of the city's liberation that Orwell heard that his beloved wife, Eileen, had died, not long after the pair had adopted a young child, Richard.

Rounding off an emotionally turbulent period for Orwell, which also saw the end of the war, his new book came out. It was *Animal Farm*, a fable mirroring the events of the 1917 Russian Revolution, and it quickly became a commercial success. Orwell, long a political and prolific writer, was now a profitable one, too.

ONE FINAL MASTERPIECE

His next book, however, would be Orwell's last. In 1946, he wrote: "What I have most wanted to do... is to make political writing into an art," and he did so, but at a cost. With the *Animal Farm* money, he took a remote house on the island of Jura, in the Inner Hebrides, to work on his dystopian novel filled with terrifying concepts like the Thought Police, doublethink, Room 101 and Big Brother. His health failing due to tuberculosis, exacerbated by horror side effects caused by an experimental treatment drug, Orwell worked himself to death, succumbing on 21 January 1950, aged 46 – just months after marrying his second wife, Sonia.

But he had finished the book: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. An instant classic, it has managed to maintain a near-unrivalled influence on popular culture and remains a searingly relevant work that has changed how we view, and speak about, the future.

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

George Orwell is known to have made numerous broadcasts for the BBC during his career at the corporation, but no recordings have survived. Early radio was treated as a live medium, with broadcasts rarely kept for posterity

"Orwell loathed imperialism, rejected a bourgeois lifestyle, and longed – even fought – for socialist revolution"

RIGHT: Members of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification pictured in Barcelona, 1936. Orwell, who wrote about the Spanish Civil War in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), is visible at the back

FAR RIGHT: Orwell's first wife, Eileen, who died while undergoing routine surgery in 1945. The author would marry his second wife, Sonia, just a few months before his own tragic death in 1950

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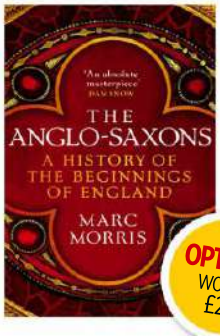

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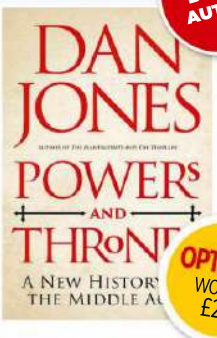

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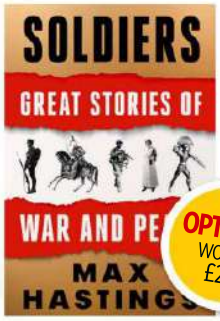

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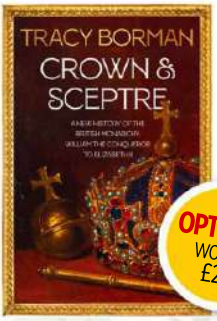

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PODCAST

Dr Rebecca Simon discusses the golden age of piracy on the HistoryExtra podcast: *historyextra.com/piracy-everything*

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YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY

Eyepatches, parrots, peg legs and a penchant for rum are just some of the many ideas that most likely spring to mind when we think of pirates. But how many of these pop culture clichés are actually true?

In this essential guide, we take you back to the high seas of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, a period known as the golden age of piracy, when the seas were awash with criminals looking to make their fortunes. Indeed, this was the time of Blackbeard, the Jolly Roger flag, and the founding of the so-called 'pirate republic' of Nassau in the Bahamas.

Over the next 28 pages, with the help of expert Dr Rebecca Simon, we explore the lives and deeds of some of history's most notorious pirates, climb aboard the ships they sailed on, and find out what gruesome punishments awaited those who were caught.

We also debunk some of the prevailing myths about pirates: did they really make their unfortunate victims walk the plank? Why do we often associate them with having a West Country accent? And what is the difference between a buccaneer and a corsair?

Start your voyage of discovery over the page with some key dates from piracy's heyday...

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Once they had been hunted down, convicted pirates often faced a gruesome end

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Before the likes of Blackbeard and Anne Bonny, bands of corsairs operated out of North African ports

DR REBECCA SIMON is a historian of early modern piracy, colonial America and the Atlantic world. Her most recent book is *Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever* (Mango Press, 2020). Her forthcoming work, *Pirate Queens: The Lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read*, will be published in 2022 by Pen & Sword

A CENTURY OF TERROR

The key moments during piracy's 'golden age', when the seas became a playground for criminals seeking quick fortunes

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

c1630

A group of French and English buccaneers (privateers who attack Spanish ships) establish a base at Tortuga, a rocky island off the coast of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. It will become a major haven for pirates and smugglers over the coming years.

MAY 1655

▲ Jamaica is captured by English forces during the Anglo-Spanish War – a bitter conflict begun in 1654 over England and Spain's commercial interests. Buccaneers are encouraged by the island's new rulers to protect it from Spanish attacks, and make Port Royal (*above*) their base.

1660

The Anglo-Spanish War comes to an end due to the ongoing political turmoil in England, which sees the end of Oliver Cromwell's republic and the restoration of King Charles II to the throne. But with no peace treaties signed, sporadic clashes in the Caribbean continue.

1662

Welsh buccaneer Henry Morgan accompanies Royal Navy captain Christopher Mings on a raid of Santiago de Cuba – the former capital of Spanish-held Cuba. The attack, supported by Jamaica's governor, Lord Windsor, causes outrage in Spain.

30 JUL 1715

A Spanish treasure fleet, carrying coins, silver, silks and spices, is wrecked off the coast of Florida. Treasure seekers quickly set out to plunder the vessel, including John Rackham, Charles Vane and Blackbeard.

c1713

Nassau, on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, becomes a fully-fledged pirate republic. Its founders are the English pirates Benjamin Hornigold, Henry Jennings, Charles Vane and Edward Teach (known as Blackbeard).

1713

▼ The first of several peace treaties is signed between England, France and Spain, who have been at loggerheads with each other during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14). After being made redundant by the Royal Navy, thousands of British sailors turn to piracy – a lucrative form of income.

23 MAY 1701

◀ Scottish privateer William Kidd is hanged at Execution Dock in Wapping, London, having turned to piracy after being sent on a mission to suppress pirate activity in the Indian Ocean.

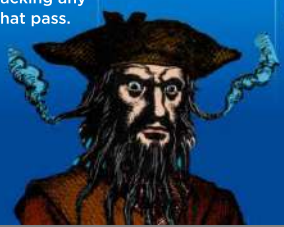
GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X7

5 SEP 1717

◀ Britain's King George I (*left*) issues the Proclamation for Suppressing of Pirates, offering pardons for those who surrender themselves by the same date the following year.

MAY 1718

▼ Blackbeard (*below*) blockades the port of Charles Town in South Carolina for a week, demanding medical supplies and ransacking any ships that pass.



5 SEP 1718

More than 600 pirates have now been pardoned by George I, including Blackbeard and Hornigold.

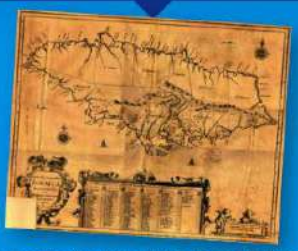
22 NOV 1718

▶ Blackbeard, back at sea despite his royal pardon, is killed off the coast North Carolina by Lieutenant Robert Maynard and a group of fellow pirate hunters. The pirate's head is fixed to the prow of Maynard's ship as a grisly trophy.

11 JUL 1668

◀ Morgan and his crew occupy the Spanish settlement of Portobelo (now part of modern-day Panama). They negotiate a ransom of 100,000 pesos in gold coins and silver ingots and receive a rapturous reception back in Jamaica. The incident helps cement Morgan's fearsome reputation.

1670



▲ The Treaty of Madrid is signed between England and Spain. England agrees to suppress piracy in the Caribbean, while Spain promises to recognise England's sovereignty over Jamaica.

1674

▶ Henry Morgan (*right*) is knighted by Charles II and made lieutenant governor of Jamaica. Originally summoned to England to face charges of piracy, he is now lauded as a hero.

SEP 1695

◀ English pirate Henry Every carries out one of the largest heists in history when he captures the *Ganj-i-Sawai*, a ship belonging to the Mughal emperor and laden with treasure worth roughly £600,000 (around £127m today). He becomes the subject of one of the earliest international manhunts in history, but is never found.

7 JUN 1692

▼ An earthquake destroys Port Royal. It never recovers to its earlier heights as a vital English trading port and pirate haven.

25 AUG 1688

Henry Morgan dies a wealthy man in Jamaica; an amnesty is proclaimed allowing pirates to attend his funeral without fear of arrest.

6 DEC 1687

An entry in a French pirate logbook describes the raising of a flag bearing a skull and crossbones – one of the earliest known references to the 'Jolly Roger' symbol associated with piracy.

12 DEC 1718

Nassau's time as a pirate republic comes to an end with the execution of nine ringleaders captured by Hornigold, who has recently switched sides to become a pirate hunter.

1721

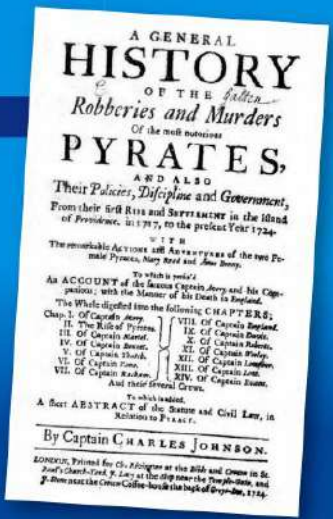
The Piracy Act is passed in Britain. The Royal Navy now has more powers to suppress piracy, while the courts can also impose harsher penalties for illegal cargo trading.

MAR 1722

A mass trial takes place at Cape Coast Castle, West Africa, for dozens of crewmen previously led by the late pirate Bartholomew Roberts – alleged to have plundered more than 400 ships. Fifty-two men are hanged, while 17 are sent to London's notorious Marshalsea Prison. By now, the so-called 'golden age' of piracy has virtually come to an end.

MAY 1724

▶ Captain Charles Johnson (likely a pseudonym) publishes *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*. It contains biographies of some of history's most prolific pirates and helps shape their near-mythical status. ⊙



A GENERAL
HISTORY
OF THE
Robberies and Murders
Of the most notorious
PYRATES,
AND ALSO
Their Policies, Discipline and Government,
From their first Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, in 1717, to the present Year 1724.
WITH
The remarkable Actions and Adventures of the two Female Pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny.
To which is prefix'd
An ACCOUNT of the famous Captain Avery, and his Expedition; with the Manner of his Death in England.
The Whole digested into the following CHAPTERS;
Chap. I. Of Captain Avery.
II. The Rise of Pyrates.
III. Of Captain Martel.
IV. Of Captain Bennet.
V. Of Captain Worley.
VI. Of Captain Fenn.
VII. Of Captain Rackam.
VIII. Of Captain England.
IX. Of Captain Davis.
X. Of Captain Roberts.
XI. Of Captain Worley.
XII. Of Captain Lowther.
XIII. Of Captain Lew.
XIV. Of Captain Evans.
And their several Crews.
To which is added,
A short ABSTRACT of the Statute and Civil Law, in Relation to PYRACY.
By Captain CHARLES JOHNSON.
LONDON, Printed for Ch. Rivington at the Bible and Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard. W. Lay at the Ship near the Temple-Gate, and J. Brome near the Cross-Keys in the Poultry. 1724.

Everything you wanted to know about the golden age of piracy

Dr Rebecca Simon answers key questions about an era when bands of buccaneers menaced the high seas

Q: What and when was the golden age of piracy?

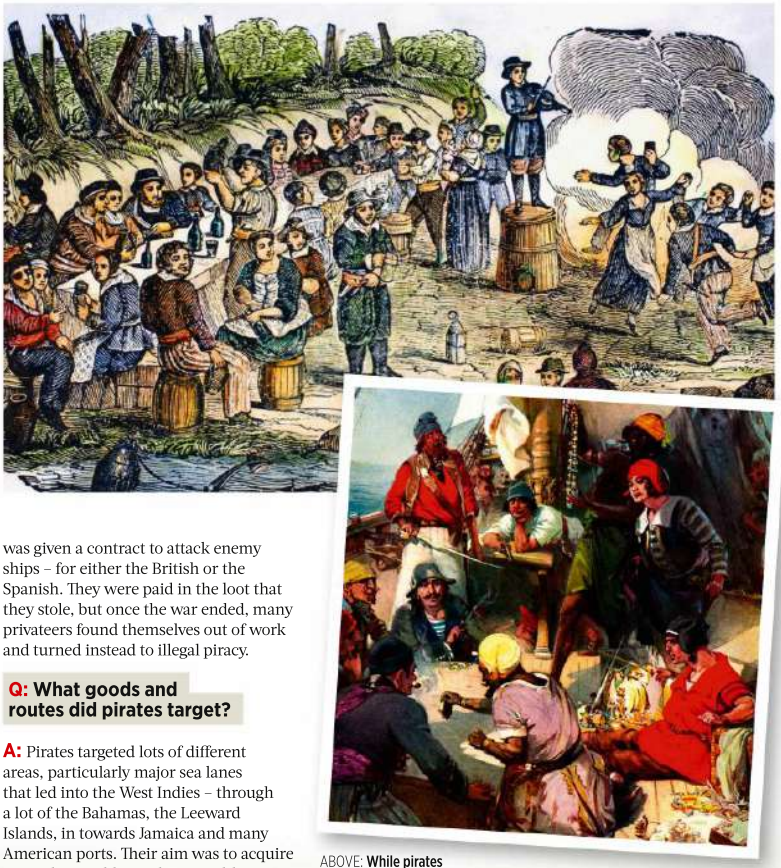
A: It was a period of time when piracy was most active within the Atlantic world – primarily the Caribbean, North America, Britain, Europe and the west coast of Africa.

Piracy's golden age can really be divided into three main periods: in the 1670s and parts of the 1680s, buccaneers of the Caribbean, mostly French pirates, fought over different land territories and were more land-based than sea-based. Then, there were the British pirates in the Indian Ocean in the 1690s. Here, we see figures such as Henry Every and Captain Kidd, both of whom disrupted trade between the British and Indian Mughals.

The third period – and the one that most people associate with piracy's golden age – took place between c1713 and c1730, during which time there were large organised bands of pirates. It was in this last period that the pirates most people have heard of were operating: Blackbeard, Charles Vane, Jack Rackham, Anne Bonny, Mary Read, Captain Hornigold and so on. It's also the time when the pirate republic at Nassau, on the island of Providence in the Bahamas, was established.

Piracy in the 1600s was mainly the product of contested ownership of plantation colonies in the Caribbean, particularly between the British and the Spanish, who were constantly at odds over who should control different regions. A main area of contention was Jamaica, which became known as one of the most successful plantation islands in the West Indies, mostly because of sugar cultivation. With so many political issues and battles taking place, the British and Spanish were unable to police piracy in the same way they had previously.

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14) was another factor in the rise of activity. During the conflict, many pirates were hired as privateers – someone who was given a contract to attack enemy ships – for either the British or the Spanish. They were paid in the loot that they stole, but once the war ended, many privateers found themselves out of work and turned instead to illegal piracy.



ABOVE: **While pirates did loot gold and silver, they also sought other valuable items, such as silk, spices and alcohol**

TOP: **Blackbeard and Charles Vane's crews on Ocracoke Island, North Carolina, 1718**

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

Q: What goods and routes did pirates target?

A: Pirates targeted lots of different areas, particularly major sea lanes that led into the West Indies – through a lot of the Bahamas, the Leeward Islands, in towards Jamaica and many American ports. Their aim was to acquire items that could give them wealth – textiles such as silks and spices, for example – as well as things that would replenish their own stores. Alcohol was also highly desirable, especially rum, which was a staple drink on a pirate ship, and wines, such as Madeira wine from Portugal.

Q: How was piracy viewed by people on land?

A: The relationship between piracy and those on land was actually quite complicated. There were people in parts of the Caribbean and the southern

ABOVE: **A print shows Dutch ships sailing under Spanish colours to get around the 1651 Navigation Act, which prohibited foreign vessels from importing goods other than their own into Britain**

BELOW LEFT: **Frequent bouts of fighting meant pirates often suffered injuries, leading to infection and amputation**

BELOW RIGHT: **An 18th-century image of Blackbeard. The pirate was known to insert candles into his facial hair to boost his menacing appearance**

American colonies who actually worked with pirates, particularly in the 1600s. Competition between the British and Spanish over plantation islands saw Britain try and cripple Spain's economy – along with that of France and Portugal, its other main competitors – by passing navigation acts in the 1650s. Amongst other things, these banned colonists from trading with Britain's competitors. The colonists didn't like this. It took away their own freedom of trade and also stopped them from being able to obtain a lot of goods that they really wanted. So they worked with pirates who robbed ships at will and were able to bring these goods into the colonies illegally. Some pirates were considered well-respected members of the community in those areas. They might have had families there, or might have even been sponsored by a governor or other powerful people.

This wasn't always the case, though, particularly at the turn of the 18th century when anyone found to be trading with, or helping, pirates would consequently be considered a pirate themselves and been treated as such if caught. People living in the middle-Atlantic colonies – such as Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, New York and up into New England – had a fear and hatred of piracy because the economies of these communities were so merchant-dependent, and pirates were a massive threat to merchants. There were many sailing communities, particularly in New England, that were in real danger of having their livelihoods and communities destroyed by pirates.

Even though there were people who supported pirates in the Caribbean and some of the southern American colonies, there were many people who were absolutely terrified of them. And pirates knew this; some would even release victims so that they would go and warn people of what their former captors were going to do. It was a way of keeping their fearsome reputations alive.

A pirate with one of the most terrifying reputations was Edward Teach – known as Blackbeard – who was described as looking as if he had emerged from the gates of hell. He deliberately made himself look as frightening as possible, putting candles or pieces of fuse in his long beard so that it would smoke. So pirates were very aware of their grim reputations, and many of them did capitalise on it because it gave them an advantage when attacking ships, and often meant they could get their victims to surrender very quickly.

Q: What ailments and illnesses did pirates at sea suffer from?

A: Pirate ships, and pretty much all other ships at the time, experienced similar ailments among their crews. Perhaps the number one threat to anyone at sea during this period was scurvy, a disease caused by vitamin C deficiency and which presented in swollen, bleeding gums, swelling, joint pain, weakness and ultimately death. But pirates were generally known as being a bit healthier than many other sailors of the day; the frequency with which they were robbing ships meant that they were constantly replenishing their food stores.

In addition, pirates often sailed close to lots of islands where they could replenish their stores pretty easily. They weren't sailing over very long, drawn-out distances in the same way as merchant ships, which crossed entire oceans, so this generally kept them physically healthier.

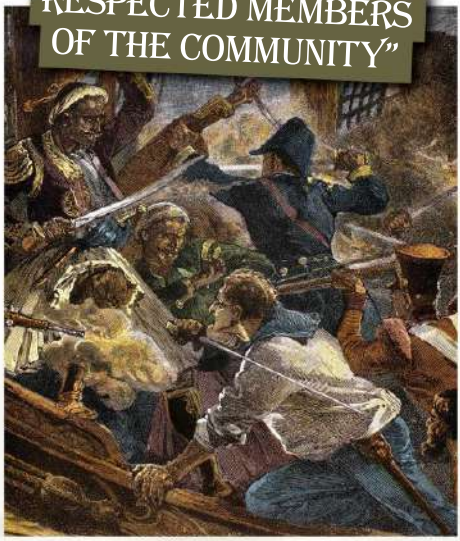
A popular drink called grog, which we hear a lot about in pop culture, but which was actually a real drink, also helped to combat scurvy. Grog comprised one part rum, four parts water, a spoonful of brown sugar and the juice of a lime. So it was both a treat, but also a way to prevent scurvy, with the lime juice providing much-needed vitamin C.

Another threat, of course, was malaria, particularly in the Caribbean. At some point, pirates started drinking a tincture of quinine – made from the bark of the cinchona tree commonly found in South America, Central America and the islands of the Caribbean – which was used to treat malaria. And then, of course, there was always the risk of injury from the fighting that was always very common. Wound infections were prevalent, and pirates could very easily lose a limb or need to have an arm or leg amputated.

Syphilis was also a frequent disease on board pirate ships. Pirates visited brothels and we know that syphilis ran rampant throughout the American colonies and Europe at this time. In fact, Blackbeard, who blockaded Charleston port in South Carolina in 1718, is said to have done so in order to get medicine for himself and several of his crew, who had been ravaged by syphilis.

The most common treatment for syphilis was mercury, which was believed to be effective because it took away the symptoms. Did it actually cure the disease, though? No, it actually made people sicker due to mercury poisoning, but it took away symptoms such as tremors and sores. So, syphilis, scurvy, malaria, injuries and infection were some of the main threats to sailors on board pirate ships.

"SOME PIRATES WERE CONSIDERED WELL-RESPECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY"



Q: How were ethnic minorities treated on board pirate ships?

A: Pirate ships were quite multinational and pretty diverse. About 50 per cent of pirate crews in the Atlantic world during the golden age of piracy would have been white British or American colonists. So the other half would have been people from a variety of countries. There were French, Spanish and Portuguese pirates, as well as pirates from East India. You might have even seen southeast Asian pirates on board ships, although that was a bit more rare, particularly in the Atlantic, but not unheard of.

There were Native American pirates and, of course, there would have been black African pirates, many of whom would likely have been enslaved people who had escaped bondage or who had been released, or perhaps enslaved people whose ship had been captured by pirates and been forced into joining a pirate crew.

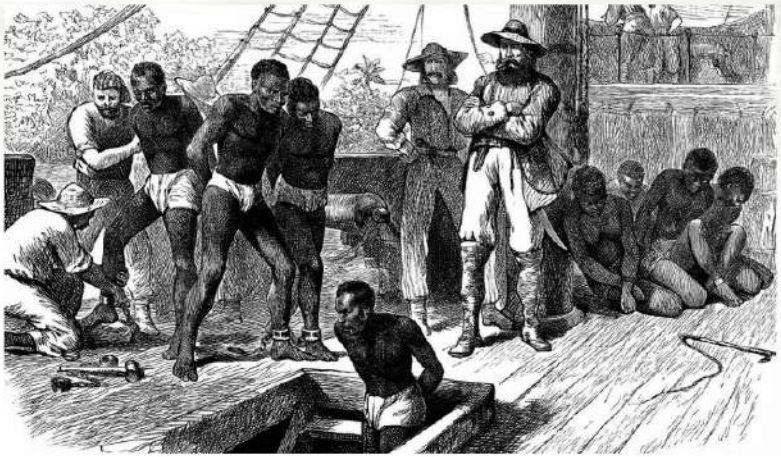
We don't know for sure how ethnic minorities were treated on pirate ships. Formerly enslaved black pirates may have been given lower positions on board, perhaps in the kitchens. This could have either been because of their skill set, or could have been because of prejudice.

There were some black pirates who were treated horribly because they had essentially been captured from slave ships and ultimately sold on as slaves in other colonies – they were considered cargo, really. But most pirates didn't actually engage in the slave trade like that. They would bring enslaved people on board if they had captured a slave ship, for example, and some of these people would then be absorbed into the pirate crew.

Blackbeard is known for taking on as many as 14 enslaved people as members of his crew, but he did eventually end up selling several of them. So it varied a great deal from ship to ship.

The big difference for men of colour on pirate ships is that they were actually allowed on board, at a time when they wouldn't have been permitted on other ships. So, you could say that pirate ships were places that a lot of marginalised people knew they would be accepted – the ability to fight and willingness to die in battle was deemed more important than skin colour.

Religious minorities, or those who had been persecuted for their religious beliefs, could also be found on board pirate ships. Catholics, in particular, were common, but there were also known to be bands of Jewish pirates in existence as well. So, overall, pirate ships were actually quite multicultural places.



Captives being forced into slavery in West Africa. Occasionally, pirates would absorb slaves into their crew if they seized a slave ship

Q: When did the golden age of piracy start to slow down?

A: Piracy's heyday starts to end in the late 1720s. The historian Marcus Rediker has argued that the golden age of piracy ended in 1726 when the pirate William Fly was executed, because his was the last real public spectacle execution of a pirate. There was also a real crackdown on piracy after the War of the Spanish Succession, with up to 4,000 pirates thought to have been executed in the decade after 1713. By the end of the 1720s, many of the well-known pirate leaders had been executed, disappeared or retired, such as Benjamin Hornigold, Bartholomew Roberts, Blackbeard and Jack Rackham. What's more, the appointment of former privateer Woodes Rogers as the first royal governor of the Bahamas, in 1718, had seen pirates expelled left and right from an area where they had congregated for so long.

Further difficulties between various European countries – eventually culminating in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48) and the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–48) – also contributed to the decline of piracy; many of these European nations needed skilled sailors who were able to fight. Pirates were offered pardons in return for their services as privateers. A lot of pirates accepted this; for many, illegal piracy just wasn't worth the risk anymore.

INTERVIEW: ELINOR EVANS
WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

ABOVE: The execution of William Fly in 1726 has been described as marking the end of piracy's golden age

LEFT: The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–48), saw many pirates recruited to serve in European navies

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

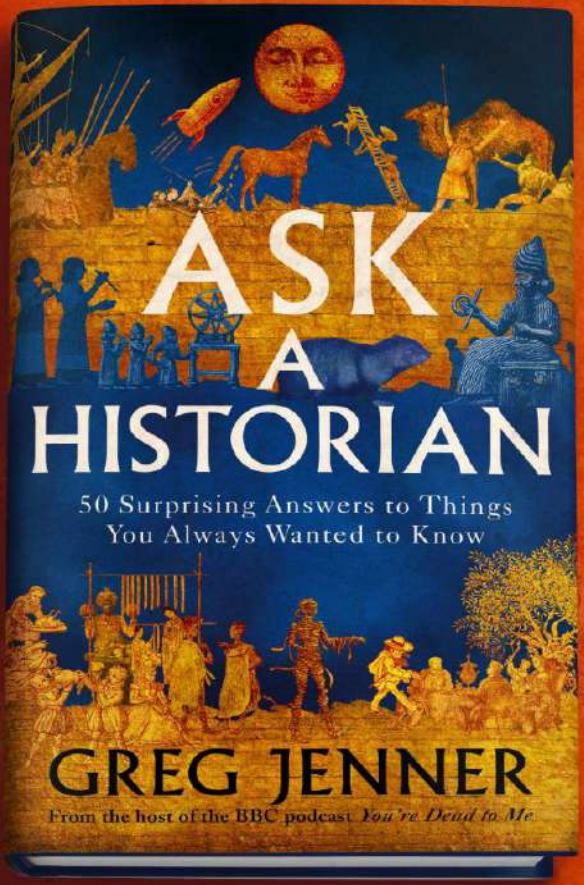
DR REBECCA SIMON is a historian of early modern piracy, colonial America and the Atlantic world. Her books include *Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever* (Mango Press, 2020)

Why is Italy called Italy?

What did the Flintstones get right about the Stone Age?

How old is curry?

Who invented maths?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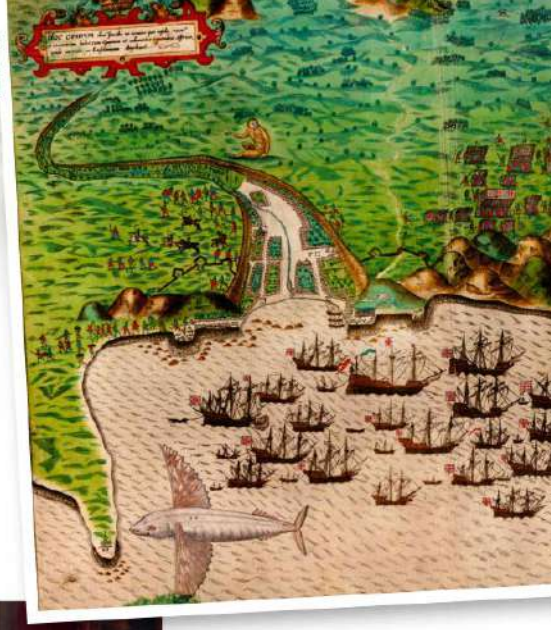
PRIVATEERS, BUCCANEERS, AND CORSAIRS



During the Age of Sail, one man's privateer was another man's pirate. But what was the legal difference?

Following the Congress of Paris, which met in 1856 to ensure peace after the Crimean War, nations also signed a declaration in which they agreed to stop granting letters of marque

All pirates are pirates, right? Not quite. During the golden age of piracy, there were several distinct names for groups that sailed the high seas. These labels could tell you a lot about their actions and where they came from – and how they were seen in the eyes of the law.

The term pirate is probably the most general term for nefarious seafarers, coming from the Greek *peirates* – meaning brigand – used since the 14th century as a term for someone who committed piracy. Traditionally, those known as pirates would use violence and intimidation to raid ships at sea or coastal settlements, and this term could be applied to any era, not just the golden age.

Privateers, though they were technically on the right side of the law, were often just pirates by another name.

Crucial to the view of privateers' activities were letters of marque, which date to the late Middle Ages; the earliest mention of such a letter is in a patent roll of Edward I from 1293. These were commissions from a country's authorities – the monarch or government – that allowed privately owned vessels to wage war against shipping from another country or territory. As they offered a cheaper option than building and maintaining a navy, many maritime nations made use of privateers to attack enemy shipping, and numbers often swelled in times of war.

But it wasn't uncommon for the lines between pirate and privateer to become blurred. Many who started out as privateers would stray outside their commission, raiding ports or ships beyond their licence. In 1691, a man named Thomas Tew, who had been born in a British colony in today's Rhode Island, accepted a commission from Bermuda's governor for a privateering venture to Africa, to take a French fort located on the Gambia River. Yet instead of attacking the French as promised, he and his crew sailed to the Indian Ocean and plundered a Mughal ship, returning to Rhode Island with substantial amounts of treasure (*see page 39*).

Elizabethan sailors Sir Richard Hawkins (*above*) and Sir Martin Frobisher (*top*) both 'legally' robbed enemy ships on behalf of the English Crown

SEA DOGS AND SLAVE SHIPS

One key difference was that privateers would be required to return to their government and share the spoils, rather than line their own pockets like pirate crews. During war between England and Spain in the 16th century, Elizabeth I used letters of marque to grant privateering licenses to sailors – known as her 'Sea Dogs' – who formed a supplementary navy. Sir Martin Frobisher looted French ships in the English Channel, and Sir Richard Hawkins preyed upon enemy shipping in the Spanish Main. These 'legal' pirates – at least in the eyes of the English – helped subsidise state power by mobilising armed ships and sailors, and swelled royal coffers. In 1568 English privateer Francis Drake took part in the battle of San Juan de Ulúa (in modern-day Mexico) against Spanish forces; although a defeat, he returned with gold and silver worth over £40,000. Many of these 'Sea Dogs' also made England's first forays into the trade of enslaved people, laying the foundations of Britain's significant involvement in the global trade.

But when James VI and I acceded to the throne in 1603, he pursued

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X6

A 15th-century illustration shows a Franco-Genoese fleet setting out to battle African corsairs in the Mediterranean

a more peaceful relationship with Spain, and consequently cracked down on privateering expeditions. By the decline of the Age of Sail, privateering had become obsolete, and letters of marque were officially abolished after the Congress of Paris in 1856.

While the terms 'buccaneer' and 'corsair' can refer to both pirates and privateers, the difference between the former pair had more to do with geography. 'Corsair' was the name given to those operating on the Mediterranean Sea and the Barbary Coast of North Africa, many of whom were privateers authorised by their governments in the Ottoman empire. Their biggest ports were in Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, Rabat, and Salé. The name had religious overtones, as the pirates that sailed around the Mediterranean were often Muslim, and they were seen to prey on Christian, or non-Muslim vessels.

ABOVE: **A memorandum that Francis Drake wrote for Queen Elizabeth I, setting out his plans for a voyage in the Pacific**

ABOVE LEFT: **Drake's privateering fleet attacks Ribeira Grande in Cape Verde, 1585**

Corsairs remained a force in the Mediterranean until the 19th century.

The term 'buccaneer' was most common in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The word originated from the French term *boucan*, meaning a frame that was used to roast or smoke meat, as many early European settlers were hunters who earned their living by selling smoked meat to passing Spanish ships. As these same hunters – branded *boucanier* – turned to piracy, the label evolved to apply generally to most of the privateers and pirates who operated in the Caribbean – particularly those based on the islands of Hispaniola, Tortuga and Port Royal. Famous buccaneers included Bartholomew Roberts and Captain Henry Morgan, a pirate famed for his bloodthirsty nature who plundered the Caribbean colonies during the late 17th century.

As the Age of Sail came to an end, these terms lost some distinction, and today, they are often used interchangeably when talking about the villains of the high seas.

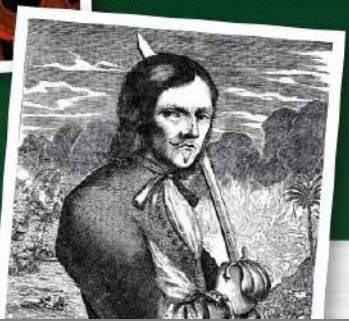
WORDS: ELINOR EVANS

A FORMIDABLE TRIO

Struggling with your pirate terminology? Here are three seafarers who fit the main labels...

ABOVE: **Francis Drake not only defeated the Spanish Armada, but also plundered Spanish settlements, too**

RIGHT: **A 19th-century engraving of buccaneer François l'Olonnais**



PRIVATEER: Francis Drake

◀ English admiral Francis Drake (later Sir Francis) was granted a privateering commission by Elizabeth I in 1572 – he was referred to by the queen as "my pirate". The first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe (between 1577 to 1580) and return alive, Drake made a fortune plundering Spanish settlements in the Americas, and later became famed for his role in the 1588 English victory over the Spanish Armada.

BUCCANEER: François l'Olonnais

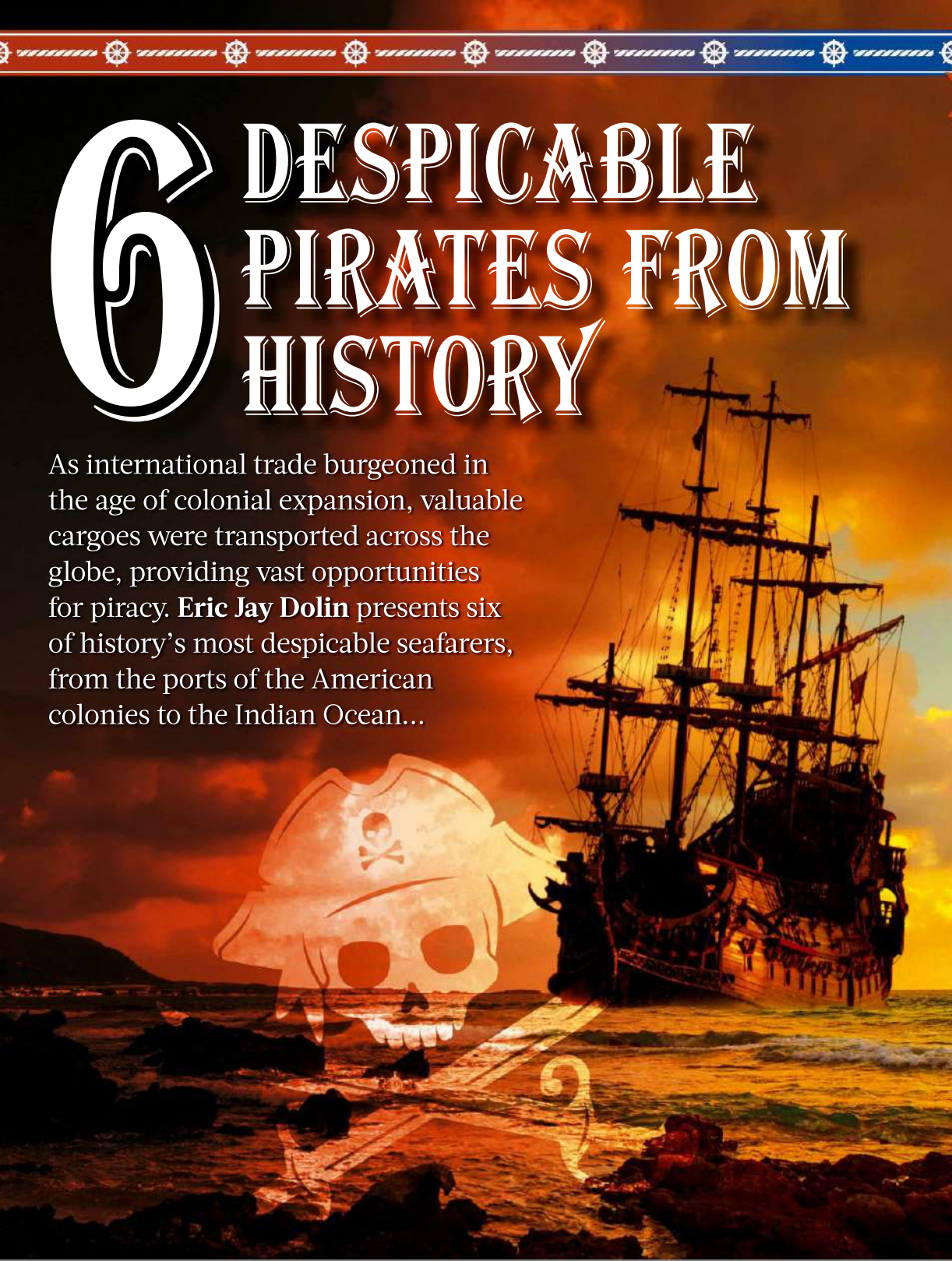
▼ François l'Olonnais was born in Les Sables-d'Olonne, France, in 1630. He came to the Caribbean as an indentured servant in the 1650s and by the early 1660s had become a buccaneer. He is most famous for invading and destroying Maracaibo (in modern-day Venezuela) with a fleet of eight ships and more than 400 pirates in order to find gold. L'Olonnais was known as a sadistic torturer. While in Maracaibo, he forced his victims to reveal where they had hidden their possessions by slicing them with his sword, burning and then strangling them. The circumstances of his death are unknown; he may have been killed by an indigenous tribe in Honduras in c1668.

CORSAIR: John Ward, aka Yusuf Raïs

John Ward began his career as a privateer, though following James VI and I's crackdown against the semi-legal form of piracy, he fled to the north coast of Africa with a band of Cornish pirates, where a leader named Uthman Dey had created a powerful guild of corsairs. There, Ward made a name for himself by seizing an astonishing array of vessels. Around 1610, he and his crew took the decision to convert to Islam and settling permanently in Tunis, where Ward changed his name to Yusuf Raïs.

6 DESPICABLE PIRATES FROM HISTORY

As international trade burgeoned in the age of colonial expansion, valuable cargoes were transported across the globe, providing vast opportunities for piracy. **Eric Jay Dolin** presents six of history's most despicable seafarers, from the ports of the American colonies to the Indian Ocean...

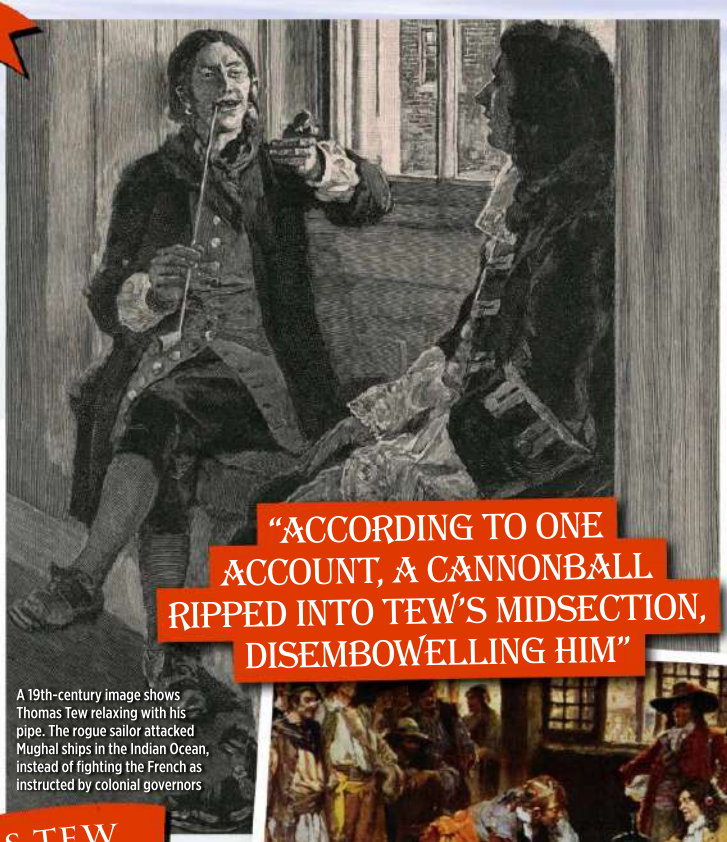


DIXIE BULL

In the summer of 1632, fur trader Dixie Bull was travelling along the coast of Maine when disaster struck: a small group of Frenchmen had stolen his shallop [a light sailing boat]. Enraged, Bull hastily commandeered another vessel and gathered a force of 15 armed men to exact revenge on the French. Having no luck in that pursuit, and short on supplies, Bull resorted to piracy. He and his men ransacked two English vessels and attacked a settlement called Pemaquid on the coast of Maine, gaining fame under the name 'the dread pirate'.

Over the next couple of months there were periodic sightings of Bull and his men, who had apparently renounced piracy in fear of the fatal punishment that awaited them if they were caught. To make it clear that they wanted no more trouble, the pirates sent a letter to the governors of all the English colonies and plantations, "signifying their intent not to do harm to any more of their countrymen, but to go to the southward, and to advise them not to send against them; for they were resolved to sink themselves rather than be taken".

Bull and his men were never heard from again, and what happened to them remains a mystery. One account claims that Bull's crew "fled eastward", most likely to French settlements in Canada, and "Bull himself got into England; but God destroyed this wretched man". Others believe Bull joined the French, or that he was killed by Native Americans.



A 19th-century image shows Thomas Tew relaxing with his pipe. The rogue sailor attacked Mughal ships in the Indian Ocean, instead of fighting the French as instructed by colonial governors

"ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT, A CANNONBALL RIPPED INTO TEW'S MIDSECTION, DISEMBOWELLING HIM"

THOMAS TEW

During the North American conflict known as King William's War (1688–97), in which New England colonists launched attacks on French colonies, many governors gave letters of marque (letters authorising privately owned ships, or 'privateers', to capture enemy merchant ships) to men who had no intention of fighting the enemy French. Instead, these crews planned to attack Mughal ships in the Indian Ocean. Since England was not at war with the Mughal empire, however, attacks on Mughal shipping were, by definition, pure piracy. This fact didn't bother colonial governors in the least. They not only lined their pockets when issuing fake letters of marque, but they (as well as any investors in the 'privateering' cruise) also expected the pirates to return to the colony from which they departed to share the treasure and pay off debts.

In 1691, Thomas Tew (a Rhode Islander by birth) accepted a commission from Bermuda's governor for a privateering venture to Africa, to take a French fort located on the Gambia River at Gorée. He found backers to provide him with a vessel – the 70-ton sloop *Amity* – and set off. Yet instead of attacking the French, he and his men sailed to the Indian Ocean, plundered a Mughal ship, and returned to Newport, Rhode Island. They returned with enough treasure so that each of his men walked away with £1,200 to £3,000 – while Tew collected two to three times that amount.

Tew wanted to retire, but his men convinced him to return to the Indian Ocean for another round of piracy, and this time Tew purchased a fake privateering license from New York governor Benjamin Fletcher for £300. Commission in hand, Tew returned to Newport in early November, where the *Amity* was being readied for the voyage. Word of Tew's plans had spread far and wide, in no small measure because of his boasting, and a great array of men flocked to the wharf to sign on as crewmembers, brilliant images of treasure no doubt firing their imaginations.

Tew should have quit while he was ahead. When he attacked a Mughal ship quite capable of defending itself near the mouth of the Red Sea the following year, the *Amity* – and Tew – got the worst of it. According to one account, a cannonball ripped into Tew's midsection, disemboweling him. After he was killed, his men gave up the chase and sailed to Madagascar. With *Amity* in bad shape, and a slow sailer even under the best of conditions, the crew set off down the coast, where they found another vessel and commandeered it. These remnants of *Amity*'s crew continued their pirating, never returning to New York. ▶

Being granted letters of marque allowed private sailors – like those pictured here – to capture enemy merchant ships

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

THOMAS POUND

On 10 August 1689, Thomas Pound and 12 armed associates launched their piratical careers by capturing a fishing vessel out of Salem, Massachusetts, called the *Mary*. In subsequent months, the pirates plundered a number of ships in Massachusetts' waters, and traded the Mary for a bigger and more powerful ship, the *Goodspeed*.

In late September, the governor of Massachusetts ordered a vessel, manned by 20 soldiers, to bring Pound and his men to Boston to face justice, using deadly force to "subdue" them if necessary. A captain named Samuel Pease was put in charge.

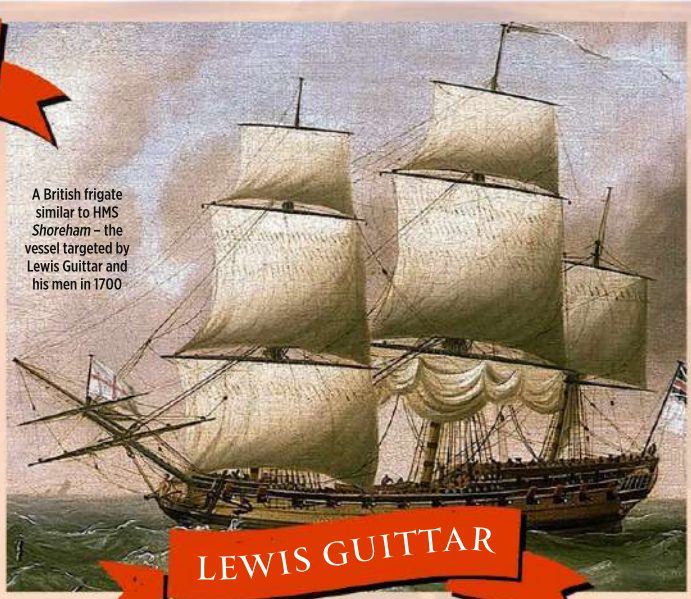
Pease found his quarry in Tarpaulin Cove, off Naushon Island, and he demanded that the pirates "strike to [the] King of England", but Pound was not cowed. Standing on his quarterdeck, he flourished his sword, and barked across the water: "Come aboard you dogs, and I will strike you presently."

No sooner had Pound issued this bellicose invitation than the shooting began. Pound took a musket ball to the arm and one just under the ribs, while Pease was struck in the arm, the side and the thigh. An hour after the first shots were fired, the soldiers swarmed onto the *Goodspeed*, getting off one good volley, and then using the butts of their muskets to mercilessly beat the pirates into bloodied submission. When the smoke cleared, four pirates were dead, and most of the rest were wounded, while five of the soldiers were injured. Pease would later die of his wounds.

The men of the *Goodspeed* were brought to trial in 1690 on charges of piracy and murder, and although 14 of them were found guilty and sentenced to be hanged, for reasons that are not clear, only one was executed.

Thomas Pound terrorised the coast of Massachusetts – until the colony's governor decided that he'd had enough

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1



A British frigate similar to HMS *Shoreham* – the vessel targeted by Lewis Guittar and his men in 1700

LEWIS GUITTAR

At the end of April 1700, the French pirate Lewis Guittar sailed into Chesapeake Bay, between Maryland and Virginia, on *La Paix* (Peace), capturing several merchant vessels. Then, HMS *Shoreham*, captained by William Passenger, appeared on the horizon. Pandemonium broke out on the pirate ship: 50 prisoners were hustled down into the hold and *La Paix* was readied for battle. Passenger relished the coming engagement, boasting that "this is but a small fellow, we shall have him presently."

For hours, the two ships pummelled each other with broadsides [cannons on the sides of the ships], and *La Paix* was eventually outgunned. But although Guittar surrendered, he had one more trick up his sleeve. After ordering his men to lay a trail of gunpowder leading to the ship's magazine, he then forced one of the prisoners to swim to the *Shoreham* to deliver the following ultimatum: "Tell the commander in chief if he will not give me and my men quarter and pardon, I will blow up the ship and we will all die together."

Virginia governor Francis Nicholson, who was on board the *Shoreham*, agreed to grant the pirates quarter [the right to be taken prisoner instead of instant death] and refer them to the mercy of the king. But the damage had already been done: 26 pirates were killed during the battle, with eight others later dying of their wounds. Four men also lay dead on the *Shoreham*, with many more injured.

In the end, Guittar and the rest of the surviving pirates were shipped to England, where William III, feeling unmerciful, put them on trial. Ultimately, Guittar and more than 50 of his crew were found guilty and executed.

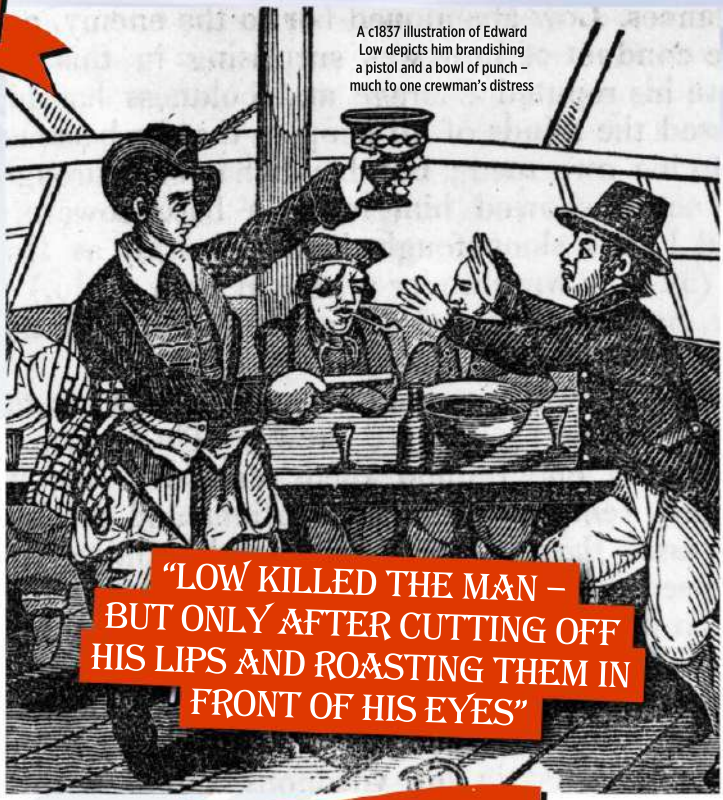
John Phillips depicted on a 19th-century cigarette card (*above*), along with a replica of the flag he reportedly flew on board *Revenge* (*right*)

EDWARD LOW

Edward Low started his piratical career in 1721 in the Caribbean. Over the next few years, Low blazed a path of destruction, becoming, according to one contemporary account, "the most noted pirate in America" – and certainly the most vicious. He seemed to relish torturing and killing his victims. When the captain of one boarded ship had the temerity to cut the rope holding a bag of coins, so that it fell into the ocean rather into the pirates' hands, Low killed him – but only after cutting off his lips and roasting them in front of his eyes. Then, Low killed the captain's entire crew of 32 people.

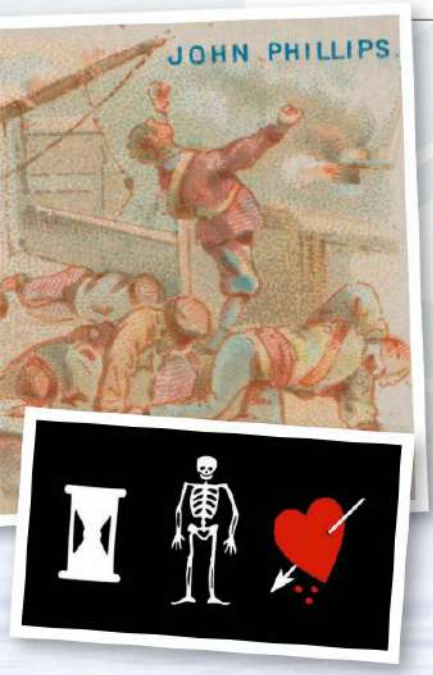
On another occasion, when Low seized casks of wine and brandy from a captured vessel, its captain asked if Low would be so kind as to write a sentence or two stating that he had taken the liquor, so that the owners wouldn't think that the captain had dishonestly sold it and pocketed the profits. Low cheerily agreed, and said that he would be right back with what the man had requested. A few minutes later, Low returned with two loaded pistols, and "presenting one at [the captain's] bowels", he told the petrified man that this "was for his wine, and discharged it". He then pointed the other pistol at the captain's head, saying this one is "for your brandy" and fired again.

Although one of Low's ships was captured by a British naval vessel, and 26 of the pirates on board were hanged in Newport, Rhode Island, Low continued his plundering ways until the spring of 1724, when he suddenly disappears from the historical record.



A c1837 illustration of Edward Low depicts him brandishing a pistol and a bowl of punch – much to one crewman's distress

"LOW KILLED THE MAN – BUT ONLY AFTER CUTTING OFF HIS LIPS AND ROASTING THEM IN FRONT OF HIS EYES"



JOHN PHILLIPS

John Phillips and four other men became pirates during the summer of 1723, stealing a schooner off Newfoundland and christening it *Revenge*. They then proceeded to plunder more than 30 vessels up and down the American coast. In late March 1724, Phillips overpowered a Virginia ship, whose captain, John Mortimer, refused to hand over his valuable geese and hogs. This infuriated Phillips, leading to a yelling match between the two, which quickly escalated when Mortimer, apparently a brave but reckless man, grabbed a handspike and struck Phillips, who drew his sword and ran Mortimer through, killing him.

Phillips forced many men to become pirates against their will, and that was his ultimate undoing. A few of the forced men – including John Fillmore (the great-grandfather of Millard Fillmore, the 13th president of the United States), Edward Cheesman, Isaac Lassen and Andrew Harradine – began to quietly conspire to rise up when the time was right. That time finally came on 18 April 1724, about 40 miles southeast of Cape Sable, Nova Scotia.

The prisoners were doing some repairs on the ship when one of them gave the signal. Cheesman jumped up and grabbed the nearest pirate, pitching him overboard. A split second later, Lassen grabbed Phillips' arm, while Harradine reached for an adze (a cutting tool similar to an axe) and brought it down on the captain's head, killing him instantly. In the meantime, Fillmore dispatched another pirate with a broadax, while the co-conspirators lunged at the gunner and flung him over the rails. The remaining pirates, seeing the force arrayed against them, gave up.

Harradine piloted the pirate's ship and remaining crew to Boston, carrying the severed heads of Phillips and his boatswain in a barrel full of salt. The subsequent trials of Phillips' remaining men resulted in four being found guilty. Two were given a reprieve and the other two were hanged on 2 June 1724.

ERIC JAY DOLIN is an author and historian. His works include *Black Flags, Blue Waters: The Epic History of America's Most Notorious Pirates* (Liveright, 2018). His book on privateering in the American Revolution will be available in May 2022

PARTNERS IN CRIME

Dr Rebecca Simon explores the lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read – the deadly female pirate duo who plundered their way to infamy

In November 1720, a pair of women named Anne Bonny and Mary Read took the stand in Spanish Town, Jamaica, accused of piracy in the Caribbean. Their surviving victims, Dorothy Thomas and Thomas Spenlow, recounted harrowing attacks in which the women fired their pistols at will, struck people with their cutlasses, swore, cursed, and even fought with their shirts open, revealing their bare breasts. The fact that the two women were said to fight harder and deadlier than their male pirate crewmates was shocking enough for the jury to convict them almost immediately. But who exactly were these women, and how did they end up being two of the most notorious pirates of the 18th century?

Unfortunately, much of their early existence is a mystery, with virtually no information about their lives before they entered piracy in August 1720. The only account comes from Captain Charles Johnson's book *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most*

MAIN: **A depiction of the real Anne Bonny, alongside her fellow crewmate Mary Read**

ABOVE: **Anne Bonny, played by Clara Paget (*right*), takes on an adversary in *Black Sails* – a TV series inspired by piracy's golden age**

RIGHT: **Captain John (Jack) Rackham set sail with the duo in 1720**

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3

Notorious Pyrates – a collection of pirate biographies published in 1724. However, the book is largely fiction, with very little fact. Anne Bonny and Mary Read's biographies are no different, and may be the most fictitious of them all.

Johnson gives their early lives parallel origin stories: they were both illegitimate children raised as boys to avoid social scandal as bastard daughters. Anne then eschewed 18th-century female societal roles by running away with a sailor, James Bonny, to become a pirate. After several years at sea, they landed at Nassau on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, and separated. Anne subsequently spent much of her time in taverns wooing sailors and pirates until she met Captain John (Jack) Rackham.

Mary apparently had a similar story in that she joined the British Army in Flanders disguised as a young man. She then seduced and married a fellow soldier, but he died soon after, so she resumed her male identity and re-joined the army in a different regiment. Grief, however, dulled her skills, so she was honourably discharged. It was time for a new beginning. She then joined a merchant ship, which was soon besieged by pirates, and ended up in Nassau after opting to join the pirates' ranks herself. Here she is said to have met Anne and Jack, and the three of them embarked on their own voyage as part of a larger crew.

TWO MONTHS OF TERROR

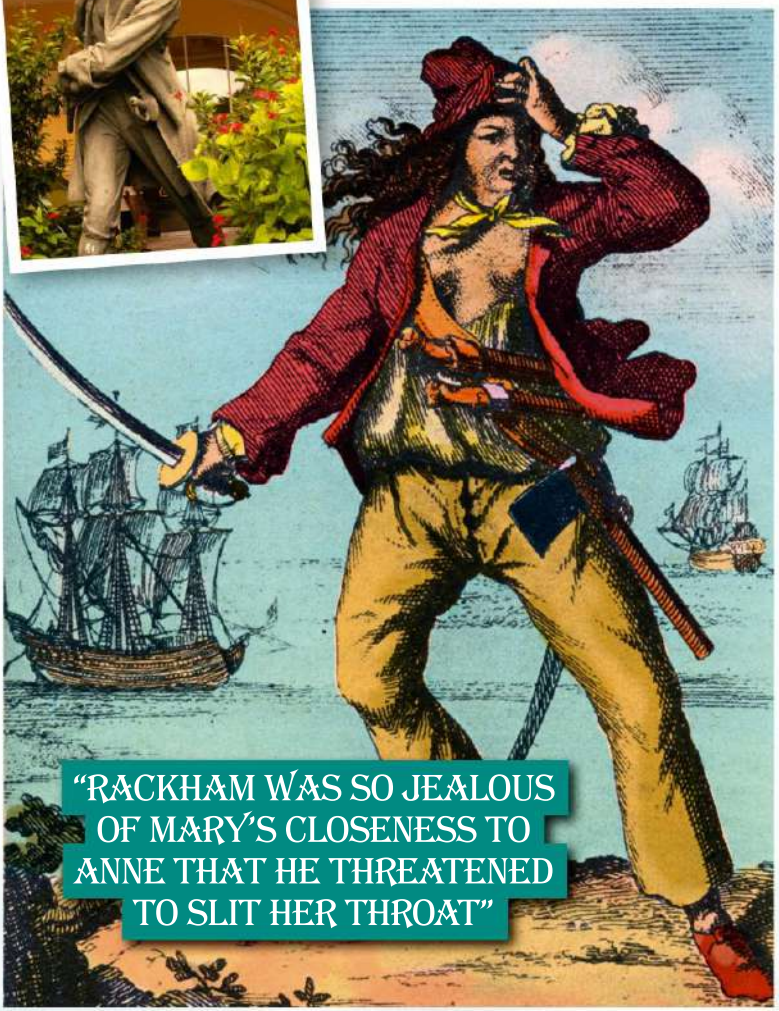
When the trio set sail from Providence in August 1720, Anne – thinking Mary was a man – apparently attempted to seduce her fellow crewmate. Despite the revelation that Mary was, in fact, female, they quickly become the fiercest pair on the ship, and may have even started a romantic relationship regardless. According to Johnson, Rackham was so jealous of Mary's closeness to Anne that he threatened to slit her throat, but when he realised that she was a woman too, he acquiesced to the pair's relationship.

Surviving historical documentation provides contradicting information, however: whereas Johnson claims that Mary joined Rackham's crew disguised as a man, a written proclamation issued by Woodes Rogers, governor of the Bahamas, calls for Rackham's arrest along with "two women, by name Ann Fulford alias Bonny, and Mary Read". This means that Anne may have arrived in the Bahamas under a false name, and that Mary was known to be a woman when she stepped aboard with Rackham's crew.

Despite the confusion surrounding the women's origins, their subsequent pirate careers are well known thanks to the publication of a 1721 book, *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and other Pirates*'. According to the account, ▶

RIGHT: ***The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and other Pirates,*** **published 1721, details the women's exploits at sea in the Caribbean**

BELOW: **A statue of Governor Woodes Rogers, who issued a proclamation calling for the pair's arrest**



"RACKHAM WAS SO JEALOUS OF MARY'S CLOSENESS TO ANNE THAT HE THREATENED TO SLIT HER THROAT"

A painting of Mary Read. According to two of their victims, both she and Anne cursed, swore, and fought with their breasts exposed

BONNY AND READ RELOADED

The story of the swashbuckling women has inspired countless writers over the centuries

Anne Bonny and Mary Read's stories have had a profound impact on popular culture, starting with the biographies that appear in Captain Charles Johnson's book *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*, published in 1724. Some 53 years later, John Gay's *Polly*, a sequel to the dramatist's famous *Beggar's Opera,* premiered. The title character has a similar background to Anne: she disguises herself as a man to travel to the West Indies and find the love of her life. Along the way, she meets a fellow female pirate named Jenny, who is evidently based on Mary Read.

More recently, in 1978, Steve Gooch wrote a play entitled *The Women Pirates: Ann Bonney* [sic] *and Mary Read*. The initial performances were deemed a failure due to their poor production quality, but the play enjoyed a resurgence in the 1980s.

Since then, Anne has emerged as the more popular of the duo, with the US television show *Black Sails* (2014–17) featuring her as a main character. Played by Clara Paget, she is portrayed as a bloodthirsty woman, willing to murder anyone who stands in her way, but with a tragic backstory that seeks to humanise her. Bizarrely, the programme's creators replace Mary Read with a fictional character named Max, who runs a brothel.

On the whole, Mary's erasure in popular culture is a mystery, considering she was given a richer life story in *A General History of the Pyrates*. However, as Anne is described as embarking upon a life of piracy out of love for her husband (unlike the more masculine Mary), it could be argued that her story has been deemed more 'socially acceptable' for mainstream audiences.

Jessica Parker Kennedy as Max in *Black Sails*. The fictional character acts as a companion to Anne Bonny, rather than the real-life Mary Read

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1, BRIDGEMAN X1

A painting depicts Anne and Mary hunting on land. Although aspects of their biographies remain sketchy, both women spent periods of their life disguised as men, fulfilling traditional masculine roles

Rackham and his crew sailed from late August until late October 1720 on board a captured ship he named the *Revenge*, with their first attack taking place on 3 September, when they seized seven fishing boats off the coast of Harbour Island in the Bahamas. They struck with brute force – but none fought harder than Anne and Mary – and took fishing goods worth £10 in Jamaican currency.

Things would go poorly for several weeks, but the pirates' patience was finally rewarded on 1 October, when they managed to seize two merchant ships, taking more than £1,000 in British pounds in the process. This huge success spurred Rackham to become more reckless, and on 19 October, the crew had their greatest triumph off the coast of Port Maria Bay, Jamaica. Here they captured another merchant ship and took its captain, Thomas Spenlow, hostage. Later that same day, they seized a canoe containing a woman named Dorothy Thomas. Anne and Mary were ruthless in the attack and insisted they kill Dorothy, but Rackham overruled them. The two women insisted that she could speak out against them if they were caught, but Rackham ignored their advice.

Their luck was waning, however. The governor of Jamaica, Sir Nicholas Lawes, had heard of their exploits and charged the famed pirate hunter, Jonathan Barnet, to attack and capture the ship. Barnet, a privateer of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), knew many pirates' haunts in the area, and managed to get information from Dorothy Thomas regarding their whereabouts. He caught up with them off the coast of Negril Bay (now known as Bloody Bay) and lay in wait until after dark. In the meantime, Rackham and the rest of the crew were celebrating their spoils by drinking all their stolen wine. Only Anne and Mary abstained, and warned the men to keep a lookout. No one listened.

RETURNING TO DOCK

At around 10 o'clock, Barnet approached the *Revenge* with a British flag, calling for Rackham to surrender. The pirate captain refused and shouted he would neither give nor take any quarter, but after Barnet fired his ship's cannons, Rackham ordered everyone to hide down in the hold.

"If there's a man among ye, ye'll come up and fight like the man ye are to be!" Mary allegedly shouted at her crewmates, still standing on deck. She shot her pistol into the hold, killing one of her fellow pirates in the process, but the men still refused to fight, leaving Anne and Mary to defend the ship alone. Captain Barnet and his men easily overpowered the duo, and soon, all the pirates were arrested and sent to Port Royal, before being carted to Spanish Town for trial.

Captain Jack Rackham was one of the first to be sentenced to death. On the morning of his execution, 18 November 1720, he asked to see Anne for some final words of comfort. Still furious at how his cowardice likely led to their imprisonment, she spoke with callousness: "If you had fought like a man, you need not have been hang'd like a dog." That same afternoon he was hanged at Gallow's Point, later renamed Rackham's Cay.

Thomas Spenlow and Dorothy Thomas were key witnesses, just as Anne and Mary predicted, and their testimony

"MARY SHOT HER PISTOL INTO THE HOLD, KILLING ONE OF HER FELLOW PIRATES IN THE PROCESS"

damned the rest of the pirates almost immediately. Although they all pled "not guilty", the entire crew was condemned and sentenced to hang. At Anne and Mary's trial, the women were asked if they had anything to say in their defence, to which they replied "no". But after receiving their sentence of death, they revealed a shocking secret: both were pregnant. As custom dictated, they were given a stay of execution until after the birth of their children.

ABOVE: **A drawing shows Mary visiting Rackham in prison. She is said to have admonished him for allowing the crew to be captured so easily**

TOP: **The women were forced to defend the *Revenge* while their crewmates cowered inside the hold**

Tragically, Mary died in prison in April 1721 of 'gaol fever', today known as typhus, and possibly complications during childbirth. Anne's end is more mysterious. It has long been thought that she managed to leave prison and go back home to the Carolinas, where she lived until the age of 82. On the other hand, more recent research has located records in St Catherine's Parish, Jamaica, listing the death of a woman named Anne Bonny in 1731, suggesting that she may have spent the rest of her life on the island.

The enduring mystery that surrounds their early years, combined with their extraordinary bravery and capacity for violence, has cemented Anne Bonny and Mary Read as two of the most notorious pirates in history. But not only do their stories provide a fascinating insight into what it was like to sail during the golden age of piracy, they also show how it was possible for women to survive – and thrive – in such a dangerous world.

DR REBECCA SIMON is a historian of early modern piracy. She is the author of *Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever* (Mango Press, 2020)

MORE WOMEN WHO MADE WAVES

Three other female pirates you need to know about...

LADY KILLIGREW

Mary Wolverston was not only the daughter of a pirate, but she also married one, too. Her husband, Sir John Killigrew, had initially been appointed by Elizabeth I to investigate piracy, but ended up engaging in the practice himself – often with Mary by his side. After being captured in Cornwall, Mary was sentenced to death, before receiving a royal pardon at the last minute.

CHING YIH SAOU

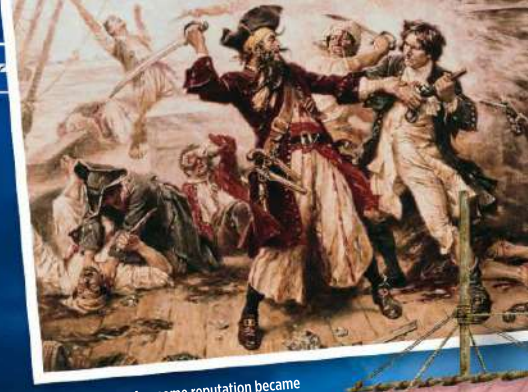
Also known as Zheng Yi Sou, Ching Yih Saou (*below*) was one of the most successful pirates of the 19th century. The widow of a fellow pirate named Ching Yih, she had command over an 800-strong fleet and plundered ships across southeast Asia – often overpowering the navies who tried to bring her to heel. Saou had a strict code for her crew, and dished out harsh punishments for those who disobeyed her orders. She surrendered in 1810 when she was offered an amnesty, and died wealthy after opening a gambling den.

RACHEL WALL

One of the few American women to become a pirate, Rachel Wall was born in Pennsylvania, before running away as a teenager to live by the sea, and marrying a fisherman. Hit by financial troubles, the couple began targeting ships along the coast of New England, pretending to be in distress before killing and plundering their would-be saviours. Following her husband's death, Wall continued to rob people on land, before being captured and executed in 1789.

QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE

The grand flagship of Blackbeard's fleet was almost as infamous as its notorious captain



Blackbeard's fearsome reputation became legend, and he is often used as the model of an archetypal pirate in film and television

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF BLACKBEARD'S FLEET

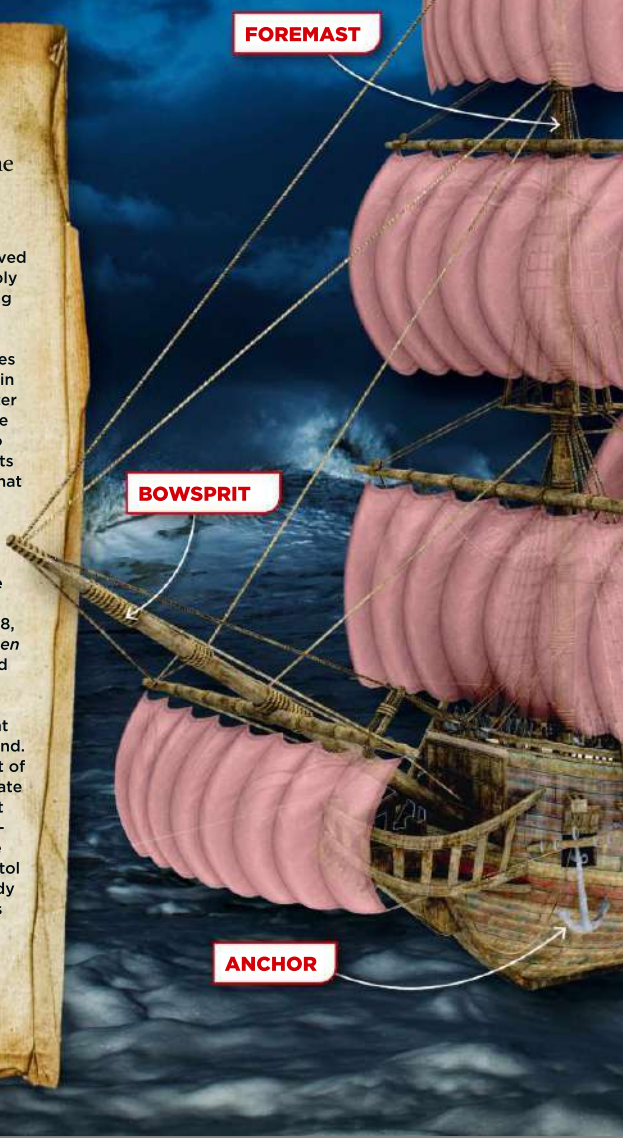
Queen Anne's Revenge was a terrifying sight to sailors, as it was captained by one of the Caribbean's most dreaded pirates...

One of the most feared pirates to ever sail the seas was Edward Teach, more commonly known as Blackbeard. Believed to have been born in Bristol in around 1680, he was probably employed as a privateer before being taken under the wing of prolific Caribbean pirate Benjamin Hornigold.

In November 1717, he captured the French frigate *La Concorde*, which was transporting several hundred slaves between Juda on the coast of West Africa and Martinique in the Caribbean. The ship's crew, outnumbered and weak after a long and arduous Atlantic crossing, were soon overcome and *La Concorde*'s captain, Pierre Dosset, surrendered to Blackbeard. The ship was adapted to make it suitable for its nefarious activities: extra guns were added and any slaves that didn't join the crew were eventually sold on. With room for 300 crew and 40 guns, the vessel, renamed *Queen Anne's Revenge* – thought to be a nod to Blackbeard's Jacobite beliefs and his desire to see the Stuart dynasty and Queen Anne's heirs restored to the throne – became the flagship of his fleet.

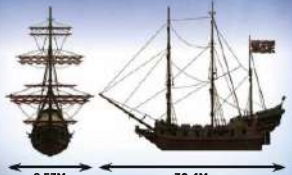
On 22 November 1718, six months after *Queen Anne's Revenge* had been run aground and abandoned, a bloody battle brought Blackbeard's rule to an end. Taking place just off the coast of North Carolina on board the pirate ship *Adventure*, Lieutenant Robert Maynard engaged Blackbeard in hand-to-hand-combat – the fearsome pirate suffered 20 cutlass wounds, five pistol shots and was beheaded. His body was thrown overboard and his head tied to the prow of Maynard's ship.

Blackbeard, born Edward Teach, was violently beheaded off the coast of North Carolina



SHIP STATISTICS

CREW: around 124
CAPACITY: 270 tons



MAIN MAST

BLACKBEARD'S EMBLEM

MIZZENMAST

RIGGING
The ship boasted three masts and eight sails

SUPPLIES

GALLEY
Built out of bricks to prevent fires spreading, the galley also contained sandboxes that were used to extinguish rogue embers

CAPTAIN'S CABIN
The location of the captain's cabin – in the stern – was the stablest part of the ship and could be easily defended in the case of a mutiny

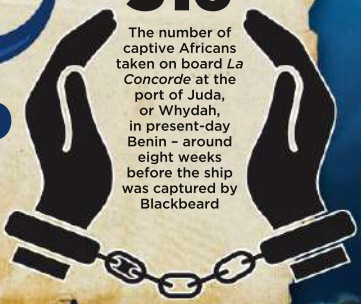
BIG NUMBERS

40
The number of cannons on board, according to historical accounts

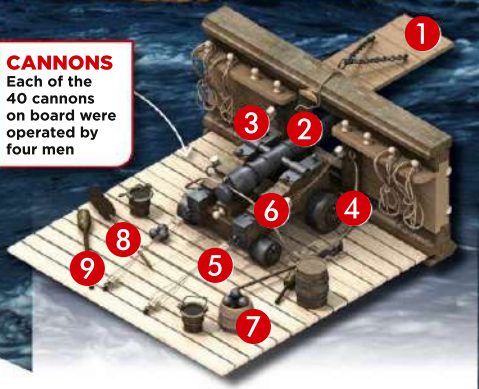
20
The amount, in pounds, of gold dust on board *La Concorde*, according to primary sources

1,500
The weight of the ship's anchor in kilograms – raising it could take as long as an hour

516
The number of captive Africans taken on board *La Concorde* at the port of Juda, or Whydah, in present-day Benin – around eight weeks before the ship was captured by Blackbeard



CANNONS
Each of the 40 cannons on board were operated by four men



1 COVER OF THE CANNON **2 BORE** The inside of the barrel, through which the shot travelled. **3 RIGGINGS** The cannon would be fastened to the ship's bulwark and moved into position using ropes and pulleys. **4 REAR RIGGING** This would prevent the cannon from moving while sailing or when it was inactive. **5 NOOSE** A strong rope that prevented the cannon from moving backwards when discharging. **6 GUN CARRIAGE** The structure that supported the cannon, which could weigh around 900kg. **7 CANNONBALLS** These could weigh around 15kg each. Cannons also fired canister shot, typically loaded with nails and musket balls. **8 SPONGE** Soaked with water and used to cool the bore after a shot to avoid premature firing. **9 RAMROD** Used to pack the load of shot into the cannon.

SOLDO IMAGES X1, GETTY IMAGES X4, BRIDGEMAN X1

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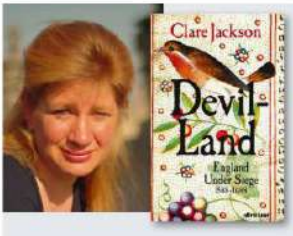

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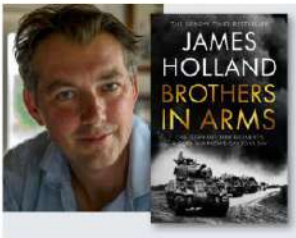
4 November

Malcolm Gaskill
25 November



James Holland
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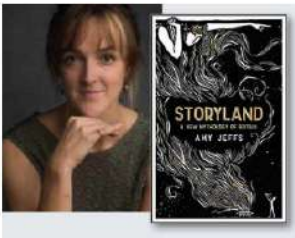

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Fatima Manji
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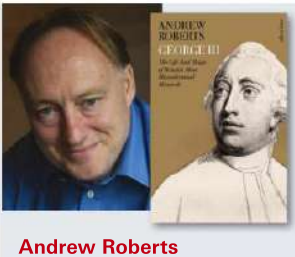

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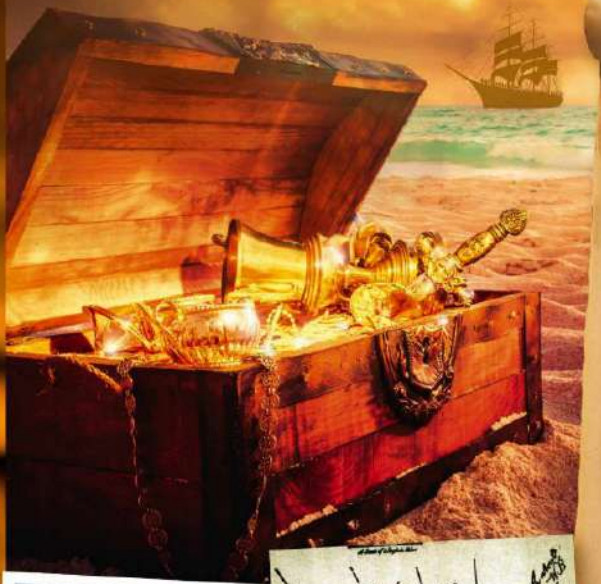
FACT V FICTION

HISTORY'S BIGGEST PIRATE MYTHS

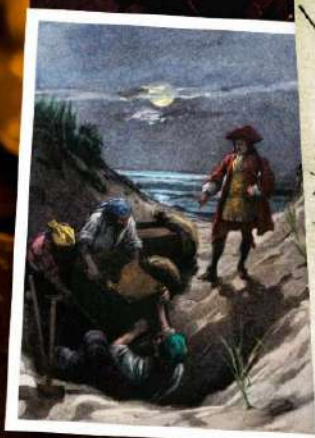
Dr Rebecca Simon debunks six common tropes and misconceptions about pirates and their swashbuckling ways



PIRATES BURIED THEIR TREASURE

There is a long-standing idea that pirates buried their treasure and left maps enabling them to find it later. However, this is a myth. The origins of this commonly held belief stem from a story concerning the pirate Captain William Kidd (c1655–1701), who tried to escape a spell of imprisonment by writing a letter to the governor of New York and Massachusetts, Lord Bellomont, claiming that he had buried a cache of gold and jewels on Gardiner's Island, just off the coast of New York. Somehow, newspapers got wind of the story and rumours of Kidd's riches spread like wildfire. However, the search was unsuccessful – there was nothing to be found. Years later, it would serve as the inspiration for Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel *Treasure Island*, only serving to perpetuate the myth further.

The reality is that pirates had no reason to bury their treasure. In fact, the word 'treasure' often did not mean gold and jewels at all; rather, it usually referred to other valuable items, ranging from textiles and spices to various wines and spirits. The majority of pirates had short lives at sea and needed to get wealthy quick, so they plundered goods and sold them on land in order to repair and restock their ships, hire new crew, support their families, or buy plenty of food and women's company. Burying these items would have only led to lost goods and likely death before they could be recovered. So, while it makes for a fun story, the reality of 'buried treasure' is as fiction as *Treasure Island*.



LEFT: A fake map printed in the first edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's iconic novel *Treasure Island* (1883)

FAR LEFT: A fanciful illustration imagines Captain William Kidd burying valuables on Gardiner's Island in the 1690s. The story later gave rise to a common pirate cliché

SHUTTERSTOCK X1, GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

Elizabeth Swann, played by Keira Knightley, is forced to contemplate a watery fate in *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003)

PIRATES MADE VICTIMS WALK THE PLANK

A horrific, but morbidly fun, practice shown in films such as the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise involves unfortunate victims being forced to walk along a plank of wood positioned over the edge of a ship, usually leading to them falling overboard and drowning. Real-life pirates did not use this as a method of punishment, however. Instead, many pirates' victims – including people forced into piracy to replace deceased crew, or hostages taken during battle – were tied up and kept below deck, where they were subject to beatings and (in extreme cases) disfigurement. Marooning was also a form of punishment, reserved for victims whom the pirates deemed to be little threat on land. If a person refused to join the pirate crew but swore to stay quiet, they would be left stranded on an island with a bottle of water, a bottle of gunpowder, a pistol and a single bullet.

THERE WAS A 'PIRATE ACCENT'

Films and TV programmes like to depict pirates swaggering around their ships saying phrases such as "arr matey" and "ye scallywags" with a broad English brogue. While there were certainly some pirates who said similar phrases in distinctive regional accents, there was no standard way of speech or 'pirate accent' on a ship. In fact, pirate vessels were extremely diverse, crewed by British-American colonists and English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, African and southeast Asian men, who all spoke in their own standard accents and native languages. The so-called 'pirate accent' was actually popularised by actor Robert Newton (*right*), who starred in Disney's 1950 adaptation of *Treasure Island* as the antagonist Long John Silver. Having grown up in Cornwall, an area known for its rich maritime history and pirate legends, Newton made the artistic decision to give Long John Silver an exaggerated version of his own accent. This proved so effective that it has been adopted by actors in films ever since.

ALL PIRATE SHIPS FLEW THE SAME FLAG

When we think of pirates, we sometimes think of a black flag adorned with a skull and crossbones, flying high above their ship. This is close to reality, but there were many other different types of pirate flags. During the 17th century, for instance, pirates sailed under a plain red flag (the 'bloody flag'), and by the turn of the 18th century, some ships also began to sail under a plain black flag. These soon came to take on two different meanings: red meant that pirates would give no quarter (mercy), while black meant that pirates would give quarter. By the 1710s the red flag had pretty much gone out of fashion and was almost entirely replaced by the black flag, which became known as the Jolly Roger. This itself sported many different designs, one of the most common versions depicting a bloody heart alongside a devil holding a trident. However, the first iteration of the skull and crossbones flag put into widespread use was designed by the pirate Captain 'Calico Jack' Rackham, who created an image of a skull above a pair of crossed cutlasses. This became the most popular emblem, and by the mid-18th century the skull and crossbones flag was used exclusively. The symbol, simply meaning 'death', can also be found on headstones, and in later maritime logbooks next to the names of deceased crew members.

GETTY IMAGES X6, SHUTTERSTOCK X1, ALAMY X1

A 20th-century painting depicts Captain William Kidd welcoming a young woman aboard his ship. A female presence at sea was not necessarily considered a bad thing

WOMEN WERE BAD LUCK ON PIRATE SHIPS

There is a misconception that women were seen as bad luck on ships. Although there is extensive maritime lore involving female creatures (such as mermaids and sirens) luring sailors to their deaths, this stems from fears about drowning rather than fears about women. In fact, the ocean has been seen as a female entity ever since the creation stories found in the *Enūma eliš* (an ancient Babylonian text), which say that the earth was born out of water and split into fresh and salt water. The latter was ruled by the goddess Tiamat, and thus the feminine spirit was cemented within the maritime world.

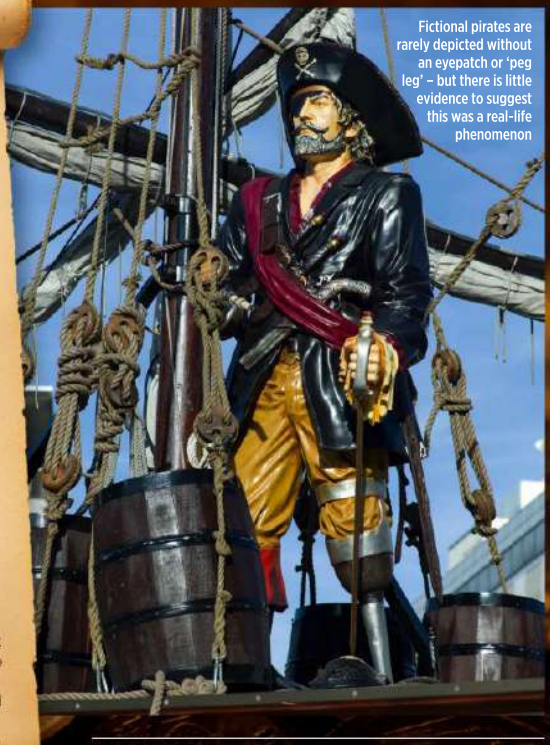
Outside the realm of myths and legend, women did often sail on ships, including pirate ships, working in domestic roles or living on board as the wives of the captain and other high-ranking officers. While pirates such as Bartholomew Roberts and Blackbeard *did* ban women from their vessels, this is because they felt that a female presence would cause jealously and discord among the men – not because women were bad luck.

PIRATES WORE EYEPATCHES AND HAD PEG LEGS

Some pirates did sport eyepatches, but not for the reason most people think. The popular misconception is that pirates wore eyepatches so they could already have one eye adjusted to the dark when they went below deck during battle. Indeed, there have been several experiments to see whether the practice works, including those carried out by the US Navy during World War II, and by the TV series *MythBusters* in 2007, although these were inconclusive.

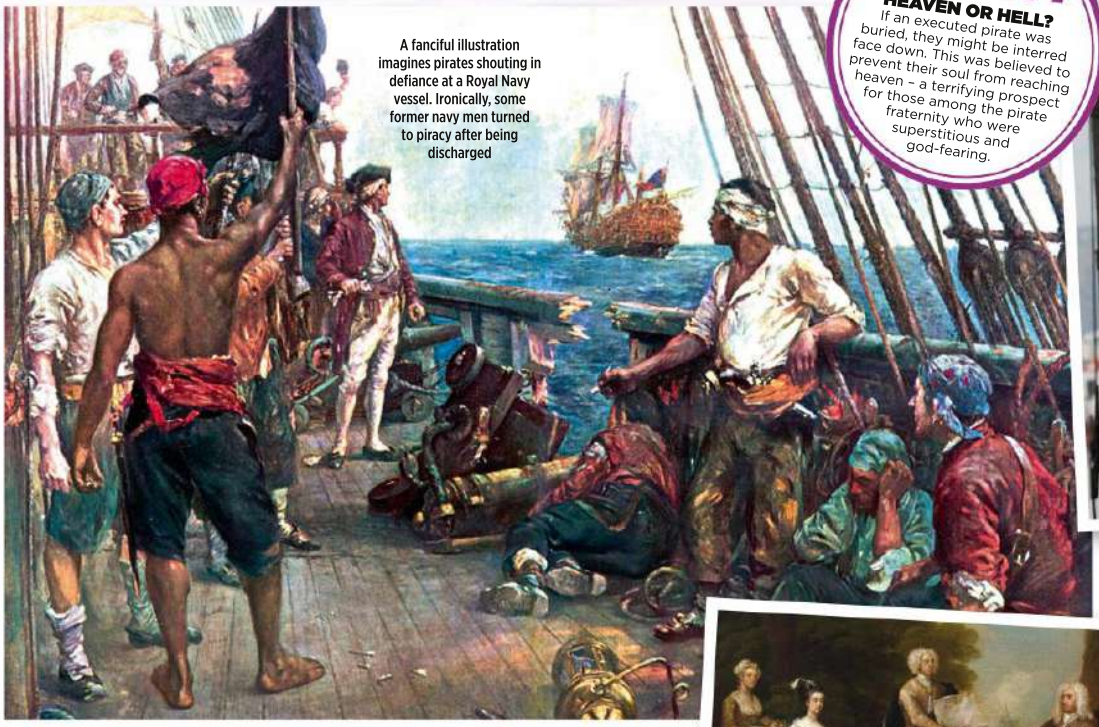
Regardless, there is no historical evidence to suggest that eyepatches were ever worn for this purpose, and instead, the reality is actually far simpler: patches were used to cover an empty eye socket if the eye was lost to injury. Furthermore, most areas below deck already had natural light courtesy of portholes and lanterns, so it is unlikely there was ever total darkness anyway.

So-called 'peg legs' *may* have been a reality on pirate ships due to the high risk of injuries, but again, there are no eyewitness accounts to suggest anyone wore them. Just like the pirate trope of buried treasure, the popular use of eyepatches and peg legs stems from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, in which Long John Silver has both. As well as his friend, poet William Henley (who had his left leg amputated due to tuberculosis of the bone), the author was also likely inspired by veterans of the American Civil War, whom he met while travelling around the US. Many of the soldiers were disfigured and therefore had to use the items in their daily lives. Thus, the connection between pirates, eyepatches and peg legs was born.



Fictional pirates are rarely depicted without an eyepatch or 'peg leg' – but there is little evidence to suggest this was a real-life phenomenon

DR REBECCA SIMON is a historian of early modern piracy. She is the author of *Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever* (Mango Press, 2020)



A fanciful illustration imagines pirates shouting in defiance at a Royal Navy vessel. Ironically, some former navy men turned to piracy after being discharged

DID YOU KNOW?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

If an executed pirate was buried, they might be interred face down. This was believed to prevent their soul from reaching heaven – a terrifying prospect for those among the pirate fraternity who were superstitious and god-fearing.

Woodes Rogers (*right*), pictured with his family in 1729, sought to stamp out piracy in the Bahamas

TURNING THE TIDE

As vicious criminals plundered the seas, sailors were required to become pirate hunters in a bid to bring offenders to justice – and, ultimately, the gallows

During late 17th and early 18th centuries, the Royal Navy waged war against pirates, doing everything within its control to try and bring criminals to justice. In fact, the English (and, from 1707, British) authorities even went so far as to offer pardons to some of the worst offenders, so keen were they for the heinous practice to end.

But for the wider public, pirates often came to be viewed as folk heroes; as mythical and dashing rogues, rather than murderous thieves. This created a strange dissonance, where killers could attain near-celebrity status, and ordinary people clamoured for the news of the latest pirate escapades.

SEARCHING THE SEAS

The 'war' had begun in earnest in 1698, when the government of King William III passed the Piracy Act, allowing pirates to be captured by English ships and tried in Vice-Admiralty courts out at sea, rather than having to be brought back home to account for their crimes. The courts – which had been set up to deal with maritime matters in England's colonies – had no jury, and justice was swift.

However, catching the pirates in the first place was often a problem. As the result of peace treaties stemming from conflicts such as the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), the Royal Navy had been significantly reduced in size, and didn't have the resources needed to deal with the issue effectively. They therefore sought the assistance of professional pirate hunters, who would spend their time scouring the seas looking for the swashbuckling thieves.

One of the pirates' worst enemies was the famed naval captain and explorer Woodes Rogers, who was appointed royal governor of the Bahamas in 1718. Unlike some of his predecessors, who had turned a blind eye to piracy, Rogers was determined to stamp out the activity altogether. Heading up a new, lawful administration in the area, he saw that the worst culprits were publicly hanged, and helped rid Nassau, Providence Island, of its so-called 'pirate republic'.

Thanks to a new piece of legislation signed by King George I, Rogers also made the offer of royal pardons if pirates agreed to surrender. While this didn't

ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X1

ABOVE: **The 1718 execution of Stede Bonnet – known as the 'Gentleman Pirate' due to his wealthy origins**

LEFT: **Actors pose inside gibbets to promote the TV series *Black Sails*. In reality, the devices were mainly used to display criminals' bodies after their execution**

always work (some pirates accepted the pardons and simply returned to their old ways), one such offender that took up the offer was Benjamin Hornigold. Despite a formidable pirate CV, the ex-criminal hung up his sword and joined Rogers' crusade, successfully hunting down many of his old partners in crime.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The trials of pirates were eagerly anticipated, and their most notorious acts were reported in newspapers. Through sensational prose, those in the dock were often portrayed as heroic outlaws, not unlike the highwaymen of the day. But without access to a defence counsel, the accused had no choice but to defend themselves – no mean feat, given that many pirates had a limited education and would have been unable to argue their cases effectively. Instead, they usually had three options: claim to have been drunk at the time of the alleged offence; claim that they had been forced into piracy; or simply to not speak at all.

For condemned pirates who were tried in London, rather than overseas, their final destination was typically Execution Dock, near the shoreline at Wapping. The prisoner would be transported from either Marshalsea or Newgate prison in a procession, led by an officer carrying a silver oar symbolising the Admiralty's authority. Once the Thames was at low tide, gallows would be constructed on the mudflats, where crowds of spectators would jostle for the best view. But unlike most criminals, pirates would be hanged with a short rope, meaning they had to face the agony of slowly being strangled to death rather than having their neck snapped in an instant.

Once the pirate was dead, their body would be left in the gallows until at least three tides had passed over it, before being transferred to an iron gibbet, where it would be displayed as a warning to fellow criminals. Sometimes the corpse would also be coated in a layer of tar so that it didn't decompose too quickly – a truly gruesome spectacle.

However, the London executions paled in comparison to some of the show trials and mass executions of the era. These occasions, with a festival-like atmosphere, were a source of entertainment for the crowds, and demonstrated both the strength of the Royal Navy and the king's authority.

One of the most notable mass executions took place in 1718, when 22 people who had served on board the ship of wealthy 'Gentleman Pirate' Stede Bonnet were hanged in Charlestown (now Charleston) in the Province of South Carolina. A similar incident took place five years later, when English pirate Charles Harris was hanged alongside 25 of his crew in Newport, Rhode Island.

But arguably the most famous mass execution in pirate history was that of the crew of the late Bartholomew Roberts in 1722. Although 17 were spared the gallows and were sentenced to prison, 52 men were hanged at Cape Coast Castle in what is now Ghana. With this final show of justice, the golden age of piracy was now at an end.

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

CAPTAIN WILLIAM KIDD: PIRATE OR SCAPEGOAT?

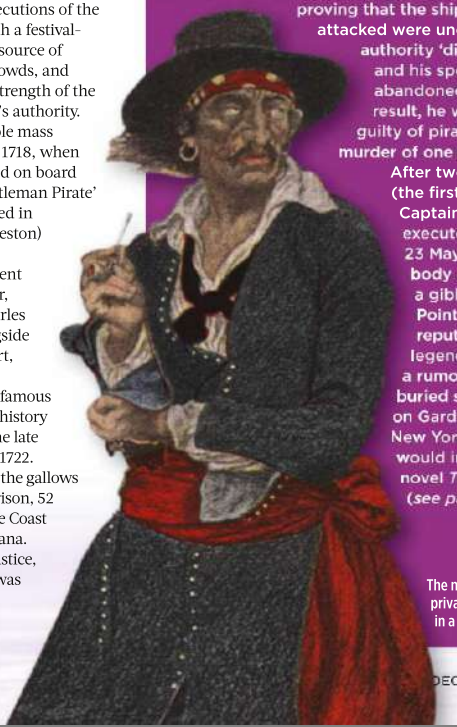
How one man went from hunter to hunted

One of the most infamous pirates to be hanged at London's Execution Dock never set out to become one. In fact, Captain William Kidd had actually been hired to hunt pirates down. His capture and execution catapulted him into the pirate record books, and he ultimately became more notorious than those he had set out to apprehend.

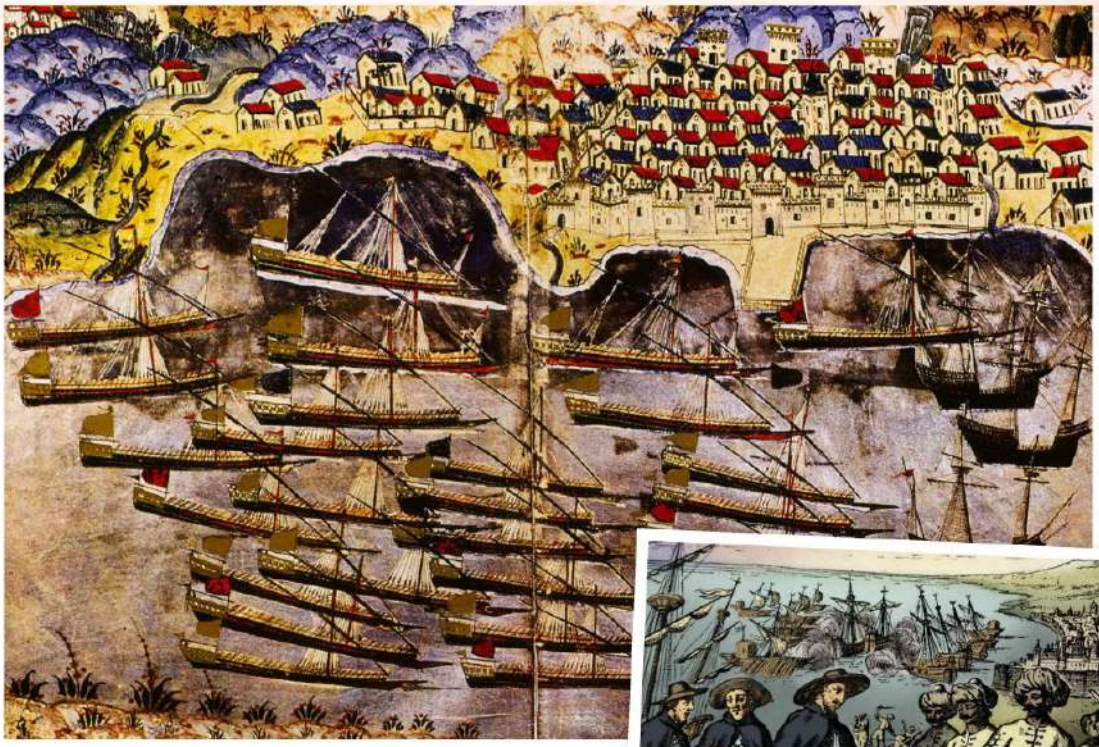
Born in Scotland in c1655, Kidd spent many years at sea as a privateer defending England's trading routes in the Caribbean. He eventually settled in New York, raising a family and becoming a prominent member of society.

In September 1696, Kidd was commissioned – with royal approval – by some of the wealthiest nobles in England to travel to the Indian Ocean and rid it of pirates. After a while with no success, Kidd's crew grew restless and were clamouring to turn to piracy themselves. Eventually, Kidd gave in, and in 1698 he and his colleagues attacked the Armenian-owned *Quedagh Merchant*, seizing more than £700,000 in gold, silk and silver. As the ship held letters promising French protection, Kidd was persuaded that his actions were legal, since France was then England's rival.

On his return to the Caribbean in 1699, Kidd discovered that the line between privateering and piracy was no longer a murky one, and the tide had turned against him – he was a wanted man. Eventually arrested in Boston and sent to England, Kidd had a swift trial – the papers proving that the ships he had attacked were under French authority 'disappeared', and his sponsors abandoned him. As a result, he was found guilty of piracy and the murder of one of his crew. After two attempts (the first rope broke) Captain Kidd was executed on 23 May 1701 and his body displayed in a gibbet at Tilbury Point in Essex. His reputation became legendary, including a rumour that he had buried some treasure on Gardiner's Island in New York – a story that would inspire the 1883 novel *Treasure Island* (see page 49).



The notorious Scottish privateer, as depicted in a 20th-century book



MUSLIM RULERS OF THE WAVES

Long before the days of Blackbeard and Anne Bonny, a very different type of pirate was wreaking havoc at sea

MAIN: **A Barbary fleet off the coast of Toulon, 1543. The Muslim pirates mainly operated within the western Mediterranean, but sometimes as far north as Iceland**

INSET: **Priests plead with corsairs to release their Christian captives, c1637. Some estimates put the number of Europeans to be enslaved by corsairs into seven figures**

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2, OXYGENE TETOUAN X1

Barbary pirates, or corsairs, were the outlaws of the waves before the golden age of piracy. From the 16th century onwards, these Muslim pirates operated out of the main ports along the North African coast – Algiers, Tunis, Rabat, Tripoli – raiding towns and seizing merchant ships primarily across the Mediterranean, although they did also venture into northern Europe and along the Atlantic coast of West Africa.

Their raison d'etre was to capture slaves for the Ottoman empire slave trade – although taking ownership of the valuable goods being transported across the Mediterranean was a gratefully welcomed by-product. The pirates didn't discriminate about who they captured and placed in servitude. The make-up of those being forced into slavehood was a tangle of races, nationalities and religions. The pirates weren't fussy, although Italian and Spanish slaves fetched a better price than northern Europeans. Nor did the pirates discriminate about which ships they attacked. Vessels sailing under all and any flags were considered fair game, making the Mediterranean a particular perilous sea for every nation.

Some estimates put the number of Europeans enslaved by Barbary pirates into seven figures. Most were sailors, but their number also contained fishermen and residents of raided coastal villages. European governments tried to counteract the piracy by offering bribes to the pirates, or commissioning them to work as official privateers. Ransoms put on the heads of slaves were also paid, too, either by governments or by religious organisations like the Mercedarians, a body set up purely to cover the ransoms demanded. But, of course, every ransom paid only strengthened a pirate's hand.

Many of the Barbary pirates amassed great riches while also developing

fearsome reputations; their legend reverberated around the Mediterranean basin, sometimes even further. The four Barbarossa brothers – but most notably two of them, Oruç and Hayreddin – set the template when it came to pirate behaviour. Operating in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the Barbarossas (so named because of Oruç's facial hair, 'barbarossa' being Italian for 'red beard') originally worked as sailors, but converted into piracy to impede the privateering of the Knights of St John, a Catholic military order based on the island of Rhodes.

Prior to becoming a pirate, Oruç had been captured by the Knights and imprisoned for three years after an incident that also claimed the life of his brother Ilyas. After escaping, an Ottoman prince in Antalya commissioned Oruç to take on the Knights, giving him 18 galleys as part of the deal. Embittered by both his incarceration and Ilyas' death, the eldest Barbarossa brother jumped at the offer. He and Hayreddin proved to be astute and highly effective operators, raiding coasts right around the Mediterranean, as well as defending certain North African ports from Spanish aggression.

A 16th-century portrait of brothers Oruç and Hayreddin Barbarossa. The siblings famously captured Algiers from the Spanish in 1516

PIRATES OF THE IBERIAN

The brothers' success not only came from their fearless control of the seas. They also showed political skill when navigating within a changing landscape and being distinctly lithe when it came to swapping allegiances as the power of certain rulers was reduced or replaced. Ultimately, the Barbarossas captured Algiers from the Spanish and established their control of the city and the surrounding region. Oruç appointed himself Sultan of Algiers.

Among the Barbarossas' chief allies was a female Muslim governor by the name of Sayyida al-Hurra. She, too, rose to legendary status as one of the most ruthless Barbary pirates, a vocation also chosen for the purposes of revenge. Born in present-day Morocco in c1491–95, her parents had been forced to flee Andalusia due to the Reconquista, the removal of Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula.

"MANY BARBARY PIRATES AMASSED GREAT RICHES WHILE ALSO DEVELOPING FEARSOME REPUTATIONS"

MAIN: **Muslim leaders surrender Granada to Catholic Spain in 1492. The Reconquista, during which Muslims were removed from the Iberian Peninsula, led some exiles to turn to piracy**

INSET: **A depiction of the female Muslim governor Sayyida al-Hurra, who personally launched raids on Spain and Portugal**

In adulthood, she assembled a crew of fellow Moors and reinvented herself as a corsair, launching a series of raids on Spain and Portugal. She controlled the western portion of the Mediterranean while the Barbarossa brothers ruled the waves in the east. Al-Hurra became of such renown and wealth that the Sultan of Morocco made her his queen.

UNEXPECTED RECRUITS

Into the 17th century, the Barbary corsairs were joined by sympathetic Europeans – disillusioned outcasts whose services as official privateers had been decommissioned in a changing world. One such renegade was John Ward, a privateer from Kent who had been engaged by Elizabeth I to plunder Spanish ships after the failed invasion of England by the Spanish Armada. When the war with Spain ended during the rule of James I, Ward continued to plunder. It was merely the absence of a licence – a letter of marque – that changed his job title from privateer to pirate.

Having stolen a ship from Portsmouth, Ward eventually found himself in Tunis where he struck an arrangement with Uthman Dey, the most powerful military commander in the city, to seize and plunder European ships in the Mediterranean. One of Ward's most famous captures was that in 1607 of the *Reniera e Soderina*, a huge Venetian merchant ship laden with expensive goods, control of which he secured after three hours of fighting. It was arguably the capture that made him a household name. The English ambassador to ▶

Venice certainly wasn't a fan. "That famous pirate Ward," he snorted, "so well-known in this port for the damage he has done, is beyond a doubt the greatest scoundrel that ever sailed from England."

Among Ward's allies was another scoundrel, this one of Dutch descent. Siemen Danziger went by many names, including Zymen Danseker, Simon Re'is (after he "turned Turk") and Deli-Reis, which translated as 'Captain Crazy'. Danziger was an extraordinarily prolific corsair, capturing more than 40 ships within the space of a couple of years during the first decade of the 17th century. Having been a privateer in the Eighty Years' War, he relocated to Marseille where, as Ward had done in Portsmouth, he too stole a ship and sailed for the North African coast. Landing in Algiers, he received the patronage of Redwan, the Pasha of Algiers, and swiftly rose to become one of the Ottoman empire's most effective sea captains.

Danziger's importance didn't merely rest with his deeds within the Mediterranean region. He was the first to lead Barbary corsairs through the Straits of Gibraltar and out into the Atlantic. He even took his men and his fleet as far north as Iceland, laying the foundations for later Barbary attacks there. Danziger was a wanted man, the target of many countries' ire. But he was a slippery character, too. He was once attacked by a fearsome French fleet that had been bolstered by eight further Spanish ships, but the unexpected arrival of a storm allowed him, against the odds, to escape their clutches.

The Barbary pirates favoured oar-driven galleys, powered by captured slaves

"DANZIGER SWIFTLY ROSE TO BECOME ONE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE'S MOST EFFECTIVE SEA CAPTAINS"

A sea battle with corsairs, depicted by Flemish artist Laureys a Castro in c1681. By the late 17th century, the pirates were struggling to compete with the might of Europe's navies

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X2

SINKING INTO OBSCURITY

Another politically astute corsair, Danziger swapped sides when he expressed a wish to return to his family in Marseille (he was married to the governor's daughter). On arrival home in 1609, he made gifts of the Spanish gold and Turkish slaves he'd accumulated, and the following year the French government asked him to fight against the corsairs. The poacher had turned gamekeeper. In 1615, when negotiating the release of French ships held in Tunis, Danziger was captured and beheaded.

DID YOU KNOW?

TROUBLE AFOOT

Those unfortunate enough to be captured and enslaved by Barbary pirates were sometimes subjected to a punishment known as *bastanido*, in which they would be hoisted in the air and have the soles of their feet whipped by a cane.

The power and control enjoyed by the Barbary pirates for many decades wasn't to last. Technology was a chief reason for their decline. Although they would learn how to operate the square-rigged sailing ships they captured, their favoured mode of transport was the oar-driven galley, powered along by the forced effort of large numbers of galley slaves, many of whom would spend years on board in abject conditions without once walking on dry land. Within their holds, these galleys would transport a legion of soldiers armed with small weapons and cutlasses.

But these were changing times. Not only was their soldiers' weaponry increasingly anachronistic, but the galleys couldn't match – and would choose not to engage with – the growing military might of the big European navies. The latter's cannons and other heavy firepower were effective bargaining tools to compel the Barbary countries to halt with their state-sponsored piracy. After a couple of anarchic, action-packed centuries, the Mediterranean became a comparatively safe sea once again.

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

BRITAIN'S COASTAL CRISIS

The maxim "Britons never will be slaves" wouldn't have been accurate during the corsairs' terrifying heyday...

As they steered their oar-driven galleys back and forth across the Mediterranean, zig-zagging from coastal raid to ship capture and back again, the Barbary corsairs were masters of their own particular sea. But they had ambition. Thanks to the technological know-how and geographical nous of renegade Europeans who had become their allies, they learned how to navigate the sailing ships they'd seized, ships that would allow them to set a course for the more tempestuous Atlantic Ocean.

Many headed north towards the British Isles, using a familiar modus operandi. Coastal settlements would be raided for new slaves, while any ships they encountered en route were plundered for goods and personnel. In 1625 alone, around 1,000 sailors were captured off the coast of Plymouth. The coastlines of Devon and Cornwall were targeted for raids, as were settlements across the Irish Sea. In 1631, more than 100 residents of the Irish town of Baltimore were snatched for a future life in servitude. The abductees included men, women and children.

The reaction of the British government was slow. Its underfunded navy couldn't keep up with the relentlessness of the Barbary pirates, nor was there political will on London's part to acquiesce with ransom demands. Eventually, by the mid-17th century, paying ransoms became national policy which, combined with military attacks on North African ports, did reduce the number of Britons in slavery. Nonetheless, between the end of the 16th century and the early years of the 18th, an estimated 25,000 were captured by the corsairs.

A 1678 painting by Willem van de Velde the Younger shows a British ship, flying the Union Flag, attempting to fend off a Barbary attack

GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for pirate history, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films and podcasts

BOOKS

Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever

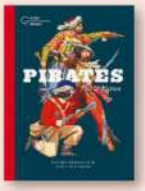
By Dr Rebecca Simon (Mango Press, 2020)

Rebecca Simon dives into the details of the two-year global manhunt for Captain Kidd, exploring how it turned pirates into the romantic antiheroes we love today. Kidd was hanged in 1701, followed by a massive British-led hunt for all pirates during the golden age of piracy.

Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests and Captivity in the 17th-Century Mediterranean

By Adrian Tinniswood (Jonathan Cape, 2010)

Adrian Tinniswood draws on a wealth of material – from furious royal proclamations to the private letters of pirates and their victims, as well as Islamic accounts – to provide a new perspective on the corsairs who terrorised the Mediterranean and beyond throughout the 17th century.



Pirates: Fact and Fiction

By David Cordingly and John Falconer (National Maritime Museum, 2021)

This recently published work brings together the National Maritime Museum's rich collection of flags, weapons, maps and fine artworks to explain the intriguing history of the pirate trade and answer questions like did pirates really bury their treasure? And, does piracy still exist today?

ONLINE AND AUDIO

BBC RADIO 4

▶ **You're Dead To Me** *(BBC Radio 4)*: Greg Jenner, Stu Goldsmith and Dr Rebecca Simon look at the life of the infamous pirate, Blackbeard. Listen at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07n8syy*

History Extra

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the golden age of piracy, visit *historyextra.com/pirates***

WATCH

Black Sails

(Four seasons, now streaming on StarzPlay)

A prequel to the Robert Louis Stevenson novel *Treasure Island*, *Black Sails* centres on tales of the fearsome Captain Flint and his fight for the survival of New Providence Island – a notorious pirate haven.

Britain's Outlaws: Highwaymen, Pirates and Rogues

(Now streaming on Apple TV)

In the second episode of his 2015 BBC series, Dr Sam Willis explores piracy during the early 18th century and charts the devastating impact pirates had during an age of colonial expansion.

RAS PRINCE MONOLULU

TIPSTER, SHOWMAN, RADICAL

If you went to the races in interwar Britain, there was a good chance you would have spotted an excitable 'African prince' in the crowd, offering the latest tips. But who *was* he? **Sonia Grant** delves into the remarkable life and career of the country's first black television star...

GETTY IMAGES

Ras Prince Monolulu entertains the crowds at Aintree racecourse, 1931. Born Peter Carl McKay on the Caribbean island of St Croix, the ebullient tipster became a TV star

The celebrated racing tipster Ras Prince Monolulu was "tailor-made for television", declared the journalist and broadcaster Bernard Levin in 1956. Yet by the time Levin made that assessment, Monolulu was already a seasoned 'performer', having made his television debut 20 years previously.

In fact, Monolulu's brief skit on *Picture Page*, a magazine programme, had been part of a test transmission from Alexandra Palace before the BBC began broadcasting in earnest on 2 November 1936. As a result, Monolulu gained the accolade of being the "first black man to appear on British screens" – even if the programme could have only been viewed by the estimated 200 households that owned television devices at the time.

Nonetheless, because of widespread radio ownership and his reputation as a tipster at the Epsom Derby, it was reputed that, unless the American actor Paul Robeson was in town, Monolulu was the most famous black man in Britain. But how did he come to be so well-known?

A self-confessed 'chancer', Ras Prince Monolulu was born Peter Carl McKay in 1881 on the island of St Croix, formerly part of the Danish West Indies – a fact that would sometimes lead journalists to erroneously describe him as being as a Danish citizen.

When exactly McKay first adopted the moniker 'Ras Prince Monolulu' is not clear, as is much of his early life; indeed, some parts of his autobiography may be embellished. His rueful statement, "I was born coloured. No fault of mine, no fault of anybody," is telling, and perhaps an acknowledgment that he knew the circumstances of his birth and his race would limit his opportunities. Either way, McKay made a conscious decision to reinvent himself: being a black man with little way of a formal education wouldn't take him very far.

MAN ON THE MOVE

After leaving St Croix during his youth, McKay travelled to New York City, where – as recorded on the 1900 US Census – he found a job as a janitor. Not satisfied with the drudgery of menial work, he made his way to Britain two years later, where he was initially forced to take on similar roles – the only alternative being the workhouse. In 1903, McKay must have finally felt that Lady Luck was on side, because he ended up landing a part in the chorus line of *In Dahomey*, the first all-black musical on London's West End. However, when the production came to the end of its run, so too did any prospect of further work. Once again, he went on the move.

Over the coming years, McKay travelled across Europe extensively, working as a fortune teller, violinist, singer, lion tamer and even a 'cannibal' in a touring roadshow. Things took a turn for the worse at the outbreak of World War I when, classified as a British subject while living in Germany, he was interned at the Ruhleben civilian detention camp near Berlin – a place he would spend the next four years. But by the time he was released and repatriated to Britain, a transformation had occurred: Peter Carl McKay was no more, and instead, Ras Prince Monolulu – a self-styled Abyssinian prince – had been born.

Back in London once again, Monolulu opened a market stall on Petticoat Lane, where he would sell the latest horse

ABOVE: **The journalist Bernard Levin, pictured here in 1974, said that Monolulu was "tailor-made" for television**

ABOVE LEFT: **George Walker, Aida Overton Walker and Bert Williams (L-R) perform in *In Dahomey*, the West End's first all-black musical**

TOP: **Monolulu on set during filming for the first episode of *Picture Page* – broadcast as part of a test television transmission in 1936**

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racing tips to passing punters. Standing at well over six feet tall and already a prominent figure, he also gained a reputation for his ostentatious clothing and accessories, often sporting ostrich feathers and high-heeled yellow boots.

Although Monolulu was hailed as an amusing character and beloved particularly among the working classes, the covert racism that he encountered in interwar Britain did not go unnoticed.

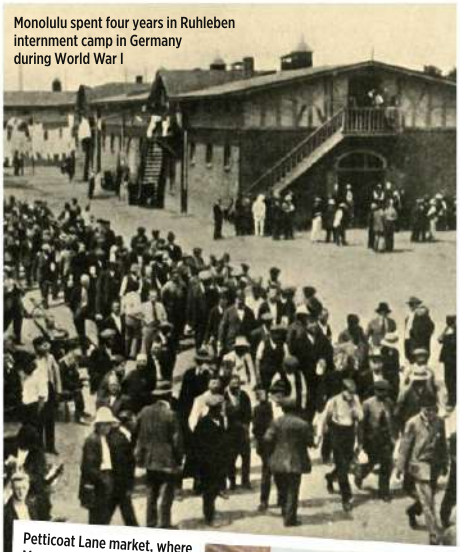
"As I have travelled up and down England, I have met with the colour bar constantly," Monolulu would write at the time. "When attending race meetings, I have often written and booked rooms in the town in advance, received a letter of acceptance, and then on arrival, have been met with all manner of excuses as to why I could not be taken in... Sometimes the boarding house keepers have kept their part of the agreement and let me have a room... [But] within 12 hours I have been in the streets again looking for other lodgings."

FIGHTING INJUSTICE

Despite such setbacks, Monolulu carved out a successful career, and from the 1930s, any British film that featured a racecourse would include the tipster in a fleeting cameo – at a time when black people were largely absent from screens. Indeed, the public mostly regarded him as a benign figure; he rubbed shoulders with cockneys and wealthy thoroughbred horse owners alike, and people would be dependent on his tips.

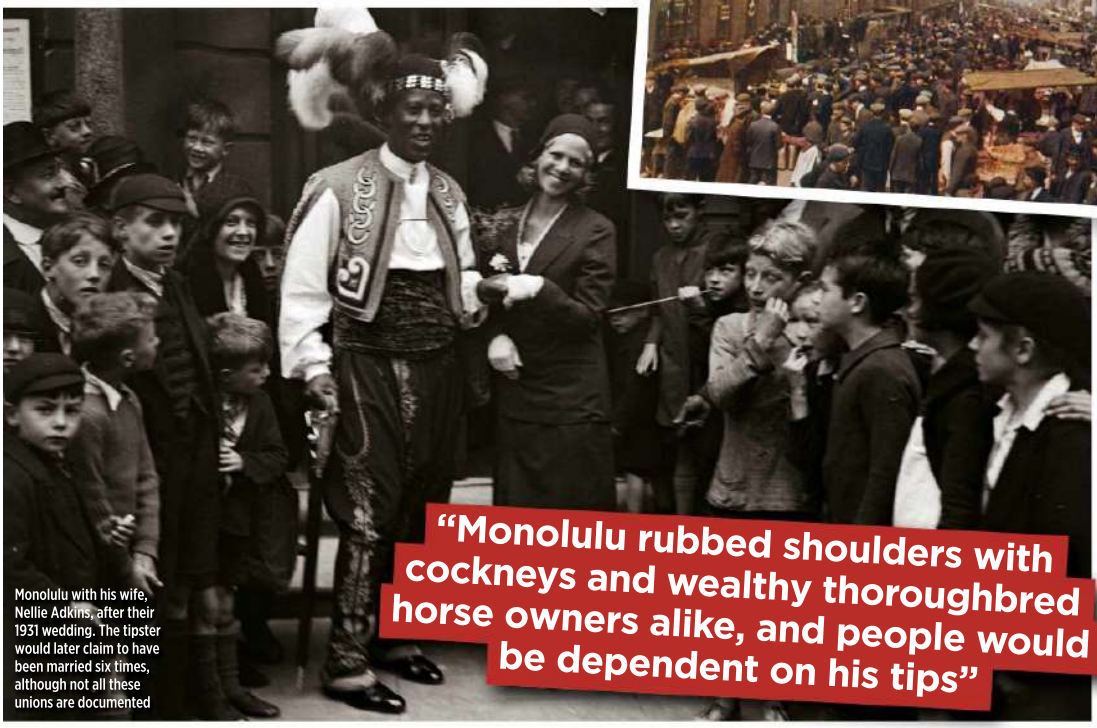
But his charm, patter and popular catchphrase – "I gotta horse" – aside, Monolulu had an awakening. In 1935, Benito Mussolini waged a campaign to expand the Italian empire by invading Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), which – along with Liberia – was the only African nation not to have been colonised by ▶

Monolulu performs on a soapbox at Epsom in 1931, sporting a rather more low-key outfit than usual



Monolulu spent four years in Ruhleben internment camp in Germany during World War I

Petticoat Lane market, where Monolulu sold horse racing tips to passing punters, was a hive of activity



Monolulu with his wife, Nellie Adkins, after their 1931 wedding. The tipster would later claim to have been married six times, although not all these unions are documented

"Monolulu rubbed shoulders with cockneys and wealthy thoroughbred horse owners alike, and people would be dependent on his tips"

MAIN: A crowd of police officers enjoy Monolulu's antics at Epsom in 1938. His political activities, however, would occasionally land him in legal trouble

RIGHT: Monolulu poses with a family of 'pearlies' – traditional working-class fundraisers from London's East End – in 1936

BELOW: With Italy planning to invade Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), Monolulu, on behalf of the International African Friends of Abyssinia, addresses a rally in Trafalgar Square, 1935

"When Abyssinia's emperor sought refuge in Britain, Monolulu was there to greet him, dressed in the full regalia he imagined an African prince would wear"

LEFT: **An older Monolulu spotted at Lincoln racecourse, 1955. By then, he had been a fixture on television for nearly two decades**

BELOW: **Monolulu outside court in 1935 after facing charges of using an "expression of an indecent nature" in London's Hyde Park**

Europe, and therefore held special symbolism to diaspora communities.

Outraged by this injustice, and as a self-styled Abyssinian prince, Monolulu took it upon himself to fight back. Over the coming years he would lend his support to the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA), an organisation that included leading black activists Amy Ashwood Garvey, C.L.R James and George Padmore, as well as the future Kenyan president and prime minister Jomo Kenyatta.

At the first open-air meeting organised by the IAFA in Trafalgar Square, Monolulu made good use of his ability to project his voice to large crowds, which was just as well, as police regulations did not allow the use of amplifiers. Even if they hadn't been able to hear his words, however, the 500 gathered there would have seen Monolulu enthusiastically waving a huge Abyssinian flag. Then, when the nation's capital, Addis Ababa, fell to Italy in 1936 and leader Haile Selassie sought refuge in Britain, Monolulu was there to greet him at Waterloo station, dressed in the full regalia he imagined an African prince would wear.

Monolulu kept up his personal protests throughout the Second Italo-Abyssinian War (1935–36), and regularly took to a soapbox at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park to promote the anti-imperialist cause. On several occasions he fell foul of the park's regulations, which at the time stated that no person should "behave in any manner reasonably likely to offend against public decency", and was subsequently fined.

Fortunately for Monolulu, the BBC did not consider his political activity to be in breach of the corporation's guidelines, and he adeptly maintained a career as a broadcaster, tipster and activist for the rest of his life.

A LIFE WELL LIVED

On 14 February 1965, Peter Carl McKay succumbed to cancer, aged 83. *The Guardian*, which would have known better, showed deference to McKay's alter-ego, writing in his obituary that he had been "born in Addis Ababa, Abyssinia". Other newspaper obituaries, meanwhile, stated that he had died "broke", which was perhaps unsurprising given that he openly admitted the proverb "A fool and his money are soon parted" applied to him.

However, the best assessment of McKay's – or Monolulu's – career would come from the man himself, 15 years before he died. Dictating his life story to his close friend Sidney White, he poignantly concluded:

"My life on the racecourses... in the streets of London... making people laugh with silly stories and jokes, may have given the impression that I am just an ignorant darkie, completely uneducated, and having as my only stock-in-trade some funny clothes, a great mouth and even greater roaring voice and the ability to tell a tale, and nothing else...

"Maybe I am an ignorant darkie; maybe I am a fool, a cheerful fool who goes around the world looking at life with a huge grin and greeting the highest and lowest alike. But no confidence trickster; confidence tipster, yes. I wouldn't have had things any other way. That is how I want you to see me always."

BATTING AWAY PREJUDICE

Like Monolulu, cricketer Learie Constantine also faced discrimination during his travels in Britain – so he took on the law, and won

In July 1943, celebrated Trinidadian cricketer Learie Constantine, along with his wife and daughter, had booked rooms for four nights at the Imperial Hotel in London, as he was due to play for the Central Lancashire Cricket League in a charity match at Lord's. However, when the family checked in, Constantine was informed that they would only be allowed one night's accommodation; apparently, the family's presence would be objected to by white American military personnel who were also guests.

Because of his high profile, the incident was raised in Parliament; although there was no law against racial discrimination in Britain at the time, Constantine argued that the hotel had breached its contract with him, and pursued legal action. Constantine was especially perturbed at "his first-class status as a cricketer and his third-class status as a man". Following a two-day hearing, the judge ruled in Constantine's favour. It was the first case of its kind and was widely regarded as paving the way for the passing of the Race Relations Act of 1965.

In 1954, by which time he'd enjoyed a successful career in law, he wrote the book *Colour Bar*, in which he opined about his personal experiences of racism as well as the state of race relations in Britain and beyond. Knighted in 1962, Constantine became the UK's first black peer seven years later and took the title of 'Baron Constantine of Maraval in Trinidad and of Nelson in the County Palatine of Lancaster'.

Constantine later became a life peer in the House of Lords, making black British history in the process

GET HOOKED

LISTEN

BBC RADIO 4 Comedian Stephen K Amos explores Monolulu's remarkable life story in *The Prince Monolulu Quandary* on BBC Radio 4: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0855vz8*

SONIA GRANT is an independent historian and writer. She is currently working on two books: the first will look at Charlotta Bass, America's first black vice-presidential candidate; the second will explore the experiences of African and Arab civilians interred at Ruhleben Camp in Germany during World War I

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TUDOR ENGLAND THROUGH THE FIVE SENSES

From crowing cockerels to pungent public toilets, **Amy Licence** reveals the myriad of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and physical encounters that defined life during the 16th century

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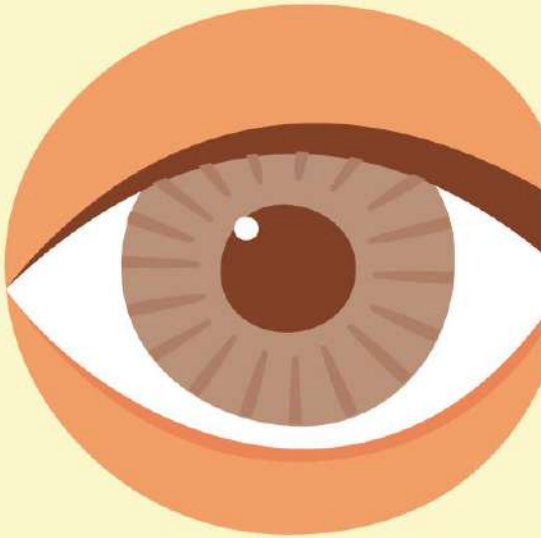
SIGHT



Of all the five senses, sight was undoubtedly the most significant to the Tudors. Theirs was a very visually oriented culture, starting with their clothing, with its layers of fabric, jewels, colours and adornments.

Every little detail sent a coded message about rank. The Tudor court was a vast stage for its strutting courtiers, who could easily overstep the mark, breaking the complex sumptuary laws by wearing too much material, or the wrong-coloured fur, and incurring a huge fine. Indeed, one of the contributing factors to the fall of Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham in 1521 was his extensive wardrobe, full of royal cloth of gold and silver, gold chains and costly colours that rivalled the appearance of the king himself.

Colour, mottoes, emblems, devices, initials and imagery all helped construct Tudor identity, from the most noble in the land, jousting with clothes embroidered in secret lovers' codes, to their servants, wearing their standard-issue livery with their master's badge. By Elizabeth I's reign, some up-and-coming courtiers were selling their family estates in order to buy the latest outfits, leading to a tightening of the law, which regulated personal spending on luxuries such as clothing.

This visual encryption extended to homes and palaces, which were emblazoned with personal carvings. Renaissance pillars and rondels decorated the outside of buildings, while their interiors were crammed with hangings of cloth of gold and silver. Similarly, cupboards – literally boards for cups – shone with jewel-encrusted plates and drinking vessels.

When it came to the visual, the bigger and shinier, the better. The Tudors loved their bling. ▶

LEFT: **Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, enraged Henry VIII with his expensive sartorial tastes**

BELOW: **Elizabeth I's reign saw courtiers selling their family estates to pay for new clothing**

Reenactors recreate a 15th-century joust at Warwick Castle. Participants' outfits were often imbued with rich symbolism

INSET: **The simple garderobe (toilet) inside a reconstructed 16th-century cottage**

MAIN: **Contrary to popular belief, our Tudor forebears did wash and bathe – but not to the same standards as today**

SMELL

It's a myth that the Tudors didn't wash. They did, but they didn't always take their clothes off to do it! Elizabeth I's reputation for bathing once or twice a year is belied by the impressive bathrooms with running water installed in her palaces.

Contemporary health manuals discuss methods of washing the body, especially the visible parts, while standing at a bowl or bucket. We can also get a sense of the ingredients they used in making soap and pomanders, masking the bodily odours that must have been so commonplace they were overlooked. Linen was worn close to the body, and regularly laundered, while the poor might turn their trousers inside out once they were dirty. The Tudors were not smelly by their own standards – in fact, they would find our modern hygiene overwhelmingly strong, with chemicals used to mask almost all natural scents.

Domestic smells of cooking, along with the proximity of death, decay and waste matter, especially for those living close to animals, must have made the Tudor air a pungent mix of aromas. Given that they believed disease was carried in bad odours, which could enter the pores, it's no wonder Henry VIII escaped his properties after a few weeks' residence.

Royalty had their own close stools, while public toilets were often communal holes in a wooden plank, set over a stream. Regular statutes were passed to help clear the streets of waste, and homeowners were responsible for cleaning the pavement in front of their doors. It was certainly a smelly era.

SOUND

Perhaps the most ephemeral of all the Tudor sensual experiences was sound. Across a distance of five centuries, it is difficult to recapture the blend of church bells chiming across the fields, monastic voices singing, animals bleating, the lashing of rain, the notes of a lute, or raised voices in anger or passion. The noises that we take for granted in the modern world, such as traffic, surround sound and sirens, were simply not present to provide a constant backdrop in what must have been a much quieter world.

Occasionally, high decibels were reached, by the regular Tudor alarm clock of the cockerel crowing as the Sun rose, or the sudden boom of cannons or fireworks. Church bells were not only rung for services, but also to raise the alarm if a person was dying or an invasion was imminent.

The human voice was the most common sound. With low levels of literacy, news and laws were spread fastest by word of mouth. Proclamations were read in the street, in marketplaces, churchyards, fairs, or anywhere people gathered. Arguments, conversations, speeches and even lovemaking would have been frequently overheard, and could later be quoted or recorded verbatim in court. Social occasions might be attended by the waits, a group of local singers and musicians who provided the most accessible musical experience for the lower classes.

Wealthy individuals could hire their own musicians, especially favouring those from Italy, while at court, larger, less portable instruments such as virginals (*pictured below*) were luxury items. The Tudors certainly valued their music but had less access to it than us. ▶

INSET: Most ordinary people spent their lives side by side with animals – likely a very a noisy (and smelly) existence

MAIN: Church bells and cockerels could function as warning signals and alarm clocks, while keyboard instruments such as the virginal (*centre*) provided a form of musical entertainment

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MAIN: Tudor food demonstrators show off their culinary skills in the kitchen at Kentwell Hall, Suffolk

INSET: Although Flemish, this 16th-century painting shows scenes of daily life similar to those in England at the same time

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X4

TASTE

Surviving receipt (recipe) books allow us to recreate some of the Tudors' favourite dishes, with boiled meats and game flavoured with cinnamon, ground almonds and saffron, making them sweet and cloying to a modern palate. Wealthy tables featured specialities like coloured jellies, wafers and biscuits, or a 'subtlety' of carved marzipan in the shape of a mythological or biblical scene, covered over with delicate gold leaf.

Wealthier people did eat the occasional vegetable and salad, but these were often supplementary ingredients to meat, rather than forming the bulk of the meal. It was the lower classes who depended upon solid English vegetables like swedes, onions, peas and beans to see them through the winter months, when one slaughtered cow, pig or sheep had to be eked out until the spring. Even the smallest gardens were used to grow herbs to add flavour, colour and medicinal benefits to an otherwise drab diet.

Some familiar flavours today did not even reach England until towards the end of the Tudor period, with potatoes and tomatoes initially treated with suspicion. The acidic nature of tomatoes – so legend has it – meant that when their juice mixed with lead tableware, a deadly combination was created. Chocolate, tea and coffee were unknown to the Tudors, who drank mostly wine, ale, beer and syrups made from boiled water. Untreated water was considered highly dangerous, and milk was best drunk in the morning – ideally by children only!

What you ate depended upon your class, the time of year and, often, your doctor's orders.

TOUCH

For the Tudors, all bodily experiences were defined by the Galenic theory of the four humours. Ailments might be diagnosed through the study of appearance, or by examining a patient's urine, with certain colours denoting particular conditions. Thus a 'choleric' man of red or sweaty face and high temper might be prescribed cold foods like lettuce and leeks, and told to avoid spices and certain meats.

Women's bodily complaints were identified and treated by men, save the hands-on confinement of childbirth, which was left to female relations and friends. Health manuals were full of specific suggestions for diet, sleep, exercise, sexual relations and work, in order to keep the humours in balance. The most common solutions to many ailments included bloodletting, in an attempt to remove the bad humours, although in reality this often left sufferers weaker.

The Tudor world was also one of regular physical violence. Corporal and capital punishment were the norm, even within the home. Children might be beaten by any disapproving adult and wives could be chastised by their husbands with physical force, so long as her cries did not disturb the neighbours late at night. But woe betide any woman who turned upon her husband, as the crime of viricide, or murdering a male spouse, was considered petty treason and incurred a sentence of death. Executions and burnings were regularly enacted in the streets before a crowd, and the heads of traitors were displayed upon spikes above London Bridge.

With the prevalence of plague, sweat, illness, birth, accidents and casual violence, the 16th century was a perilous time to be alive.

AMY LICENCE is an author and historian. Her latest book is ***Woodsmoke and Sage: The Five Senses 1485–1603: How the Tudors Experienced the World*** **(The History Press, 2021)**

BELOW RIGHT: **A chart explains the theory of the four humours – once a key tenet of western medicine**

BELOW LEFT: **The practice of bloodletting was thought to help keep the humours in balance, but it often did more damage to patients than good**

Three Protestant martyrs are burnt at the stake in the 1998 film, *Elizabeth*. The scene was inspired by real-life executions carried out during the reign of Queen Mary I

WHAT IF... GERMANY HADN'T UNIFIED IN 1871?

Jonny Wilkes talks to the historian **Katja Hoyer** about whether or not German unification – and, consequently, some of the most important events in modern European history – would have happened were it not for 'Iron Chancellor' Otto von Bismarck

The man remembered as the architect of German unification is Otto von Bismarck: a *junker*, or Prussian aristocrat, and a brilliant if ruthless statesman. In 1862, he became minister-president of Prussia, the most powerful – industrially, economically and militarily – of the dozens of German states, and through a series of wars, he forged a nation. The German empire was proclaimed on 18 January 1871, with Bismarck as first chancellor and the reigning Prussian king, Wilhelm I, as kaiser. It would last until the end of World War I in 1918.

Bismarck, later known as the 'Iron Chancellor', had brought together a large number of states under a nascent sense of national identity and so achieved a unified Germany by provoking conflicts between Prussia and its opponents Denmark, the Austrian empire and France. He skilfully instigated these wars while spinning the situation to make the other side look like the culprit, thus averting intervention from powers like Britain and Russia. But if Bismarck had not been so successful and lost any of these wars, would that have killed off hopes of unification?

A NEW INEVITABILITY

"Militarily, Prussia was too powerful to be beaten by any of its opponents on the battlefield," says Katja Hoyer, historian and author of *Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire, 1871–1918* (The History Press, 2021). "The only way to prevent this process would have been for Austria and France to ignore Prussian provocations, which was impossible due to domestic pressures on the ruling elites in both countries."

Besides, Hoyer claims: "Germany would have been united all the same, just a little later and with or without Bismarck's doing." The 19th century had seen a nationalist movement surge in support within the German states, matched by rises in secularisation and calls for representative democracy. "Powerful sections of the population were asking for a German nation state with a constitution," says Hoyer, and a revolution had even broken out in Prussia in 1848 as part of a Europe-wide upheaval to try and force the issue.

Although the 1848 uprising was crushed, many among the German nobilities, including Bismarck, started coming to terms with the idea that the existing system would have to change. It became a matter of when, not if. In fact, when Bismarck was appointed minister-president of Prussia in 1862, he thought it unlikely that unification was possible in the foreseeable future, according to Hoyer. "As late as 1868, he admitted to a friend that 'the German Question' would probably not be resolved this side of the turn of the century."

PRUSSIAN POWER

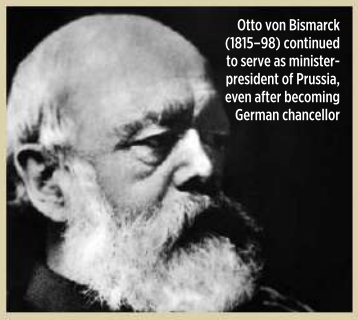
If not Bismarck's doing in 1871, then, unification was likely to happen another time. In the short term, it could have just seen two different German states emerge, with a union established between Austria and the Catholic southern states on one side and Prussia leading the Protestant northern states on the other. But Austria was far from the force it once was, so in the long term Prussia would have remained the most powerful state in the region.

"With its coal, iron ore, copper, zinc and slate resources, Prussia had everything it needed to build a massive industrial economy, and its administrative system provided the political backdrop to make it work," says Hoyer. "This would not have changed regardless of when unification took

IN CONTEXT

Before 1871, there was no German nation. Instead, there were a huge number of quasi-independent states with no single cultural, ethnic or social identity connecting them for hundreds of years. But in the mid-19th century, a new nationalist movement emerged calling for political and economic unity to answer the 'German question'. This inspired revolutions in 1848, and ultimately to Otto von Bismarck, minister-president of the most powerful state, Prussia, launching wars that resulted, on 18 January 1871, in unification.

As chancellor of the new German empire – comprising 200,000 square miles and a population of more than 41 million – Bismarck fostered a sense of national identity and pursued a foreign policy that established his 'Second Reich' as a major force on the continent. Even after the chancellor had retired in 1890, Kaiser Wilhelm II was intent on making Germany a global power, building a navy second only to Britain and joining a complex network of alliances that put Europe on a footing towards World War I.



Otto von Bismarck (1815–98) continued to serve as minister-president of Prussia, even after becoming German chancellor

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X2

MAIN: **A painting by Anton von Werner shows Wilhelm I being proclaimed kaiser of the German empire in 1871. Bismarck is the figure wearing white**

INSET: **The Prusso-Danish War ended with Denmark ceding territory to Prussia. The 1864 conflict would precipitate the unification of Germany**

place. With France in political turmoil, Italy embroiled in its own unification and the rest of continental Europe stuck in outdated structures, it was only Britain and Prussia that had the size, resources and political centralisation to facilitate the transformational processes that made them the economic superpowers they became."

THE BULLET CONUNDRUM

In reality, Bismarck spent nearly two decades as chancellor of the German empire, during which he essentially controlled domestic and foreign affairs. In the late 1880s he came into conflict with the new young kaiser, Wilhelm II, and was forced to resign in 1890. Seeing as Wilhelm's regime precipitated the events that led to World War I, it could be argued that a different-looking unification would have had dramatic effects on 20th-century politics. But Hoyer is not convinced.

"The conflicts that built up would have remained the same. Prussia would still have bowed to the loud chorus demanding a place in the Sun for its industrialists. Socialism and trade unionism would have grown anyway.

"BISMARCK STARTED COMING TO TERMS WITH THE IDEA THAT THE EXISTING SYSTEM WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE"

And Wilhelm II would not have been any less obsessed with ideas of Social Darwinism, the power of naval force, and his rivalry with Britain."

An intriguing coda, however, is to consider taking Bismarck out of the picture early on. In 1866, he was shot in the back as he walked through the streets of Berlin by would-be assassin Ferdinand Cohen-Blind. Bismarck survived without serious injury, but his death would have undeniably altered Prussia's fate. Hoyer says: "Had another politician took over, the situation would have remained similar: the Danish war was won; Austria was still a powerful but declining power; and German liberals and socialists were still crying out for reform.

"But it is unlikely that a different minister-president would have had the knowledge, connections or audacity to provoke the Franco-Prussian War in the way that Bismarck did. In addition, Wilhelm I was reluctant to become kaiser. It was only his close relationship with Bismarck that swayed him to accept the national crown."

Without Otto von Bismarck by his side, Wilhelm may not have lasted particularly long before abdicating in favour of his liberal son, Frederick III. "In that case, a different Germany may have emerged."

DID YOU KNOW?

THE STEEL DEAL

In the 1870s, Germany produced about half as much steel as Britain, but the fledgling country went through such an impressive industrial revolution that, by 1914, it dominated European markets and produced more than twice as much as its British rivals.

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BBC RADIO 4 Misha Glenny explores the history of Germany before the world wars in the three-part series *The Invention of Germany*: bbc.co.uk/programmes/b016btb4

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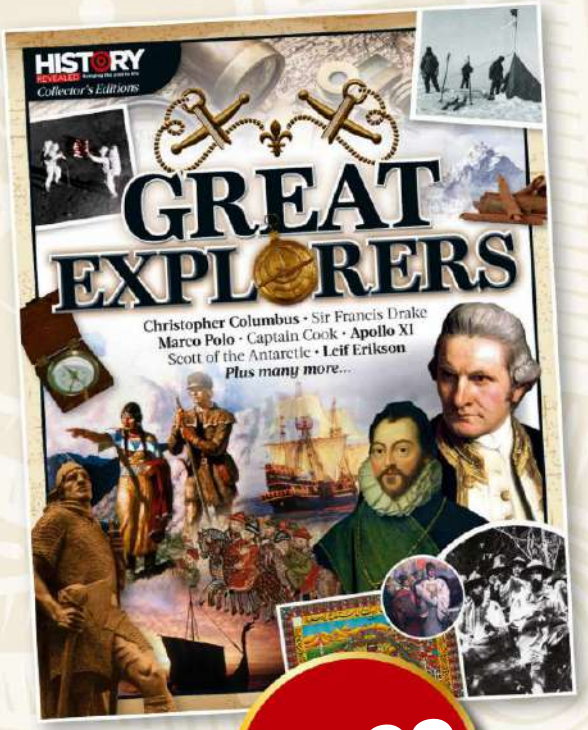
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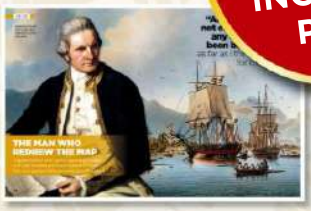

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1,500
The number of hours needed to complete the notoriously complex 1978 board game, *The Campaign for North Africa*, the rules for which span three volumes.

NOT PLAIN SAILING
Despite its romantic depiction in this c1754 painting, the Pilgrims' voyage to the New World was far from glamorous

What was it like on the Mayflower?

SHORT ANSWER **The voyage was late, crammed, and took double the time – like any standard train journey then, but with added storms**

THE SHIP'S (A) MESS
A modern replica of the *Mayflower*, moored in Massachusetts, gives visitors a sense of what it was like to live below deck

LONG ANSWER No one said seeking a new life in the New World was going to be easy, or if they did, then the voyage on the *Mayflower* would have shaken sense into them. In fact, things were bad from the outset when the Pilgrims had to wait around to see if their second ship, the *Speedwell*, was seaworthy. It wasn't.

So, 102 passengers and up to 30 crew crammed on to the *Mayflower* and set sail on 16 September 1620, packed like sardines in quarters not tall enough for anyone over five feet, enduring cold and damp, and living off paltry rations. And the delay with the *Speedwell* meant the crossing had to be done during stormy season.

Ferocious tempests battered the *Mayflower*, which was ill-designed to cope with strong waves and winds, meaning everyone got sick. One boy, William Butten, perished and another man was swept overboard, although he was miraculously saved.

In fact, it is surprising there weren't more deaths during the 66-day voyage – twice as long as it should have been – and, actually, the same number of Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts after a woman named Elizabeth Hopkins gave birth on board the ship. Appropriately, she named the boy Oceanus.

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X2

PAYING FOR FORGIVENESS
A 16th-century woodcut image shows churchgoers purchasing letters of indulgence

How were indulgences abused?

SHORT ANSWER The medieval church sold spiritual salvation for cash

LONG ANSWER In the Roman Catholic Church, an indulgence is a remission of the punishment of sin. In essence, it is getting time off for good behaviour. Indulgences in their true form take the shape of good works, charity, prayer or pilgrimage, but in medieval Europe they were abused.

From the 11th century, belief in Purgatory – the place in between Heaven and Hell where souls are purified through temporal punishment – intensified, making people somewhat keen to write off their debt of sin. The Church obliged by selling indulgences for money, with the amount given determining how much sin was remitted. The rich could pay for whole churches to ensure salvation or even secure indulgences for someone already dead to reduce their time in Purgatory.

The sale of indulgences was a chief criticism in Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, a catalyst of the Reformation, and Pope Pius V finally abolished the practice in 1567.

5,400

The number of individual parts, including every single link in each chain, in H1, John Harrison's first clock to calculate longitude at sea.

How old is the whoopee cushion?

SHORT ANSWER A Roman emperor's sense of humour proves that fart jokes have always been funny

LONG ANSWER Have a seat – although check under the pillow first – and let's go back in time, perhaps further than you think. The classic prank toy began to be sold commercially in the 1930s, having been developed at the JEM Rubber Company in Canada. They had tried to get Samuel Sorensen Adams, king of practical joke makers, interested, but he deemed the fart noises too vulgar and lewd, so they went to a rival.

That's the story of the modern whoopee cushion, though. Its true origin is in antiquity and the tearaway teen who became Roman emperor in AD 218, Elagabalus. A fan of practical jokes, he would hide away a whoopee cushion made of an animal bladder on the chairs of his dinner party guests.

WHAT A WIND-UP
Elagabalus (c204–222) was known for his fondness of toilet humour

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1

How was Dr Crippen caught?

SHORT ANSWER The long arm of the law reached all the way across the Atlantic to catch the notorious murderer

LONG ANSWER In 1910, Cora Turner disappeared from her London home. Her husband, Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, told police that she had travelled to the US and died there. The plot thickened when Crippen's lover, Ethel Le Neve, moved into the couple's home and started wearing Cora's jewellery and furs. Then, with the investigation ongoing, the pair boarded the SS *Montrose* for Canada in their rather creepy disguise of father and son.

Everyone was suspicious by now, leading police to search Crippen's basement and discover body parts. It turned out Cora had threatened to leave him and take his money, so he poisoned her and dismembered the body.

The murder became a macabre cause célèbre and the ship's captain recognised Crippen and sent a wireless telegram to Scotland Yard. Inspector Walter Dew was able to hop on a faster ship to Canada and was there to meet Crippen at the other end.

Crippen was hanged for his crime the same year, although Le Neve was cleared of wrongdoing and died in 1967.

DOC IN THE DOCK
Crippen and his lover, Ethel Le Neve, at a remand hearing (*above*), alongside a French newspaper covering their Canadian arrest (*right*)

LADY WITH THE LAMP
Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's world-famous creation, completed in 1886, served as a rather ineffective lighthouse

Was the Statue of Liberty really a lighthouse?

SHORT ANSWER Yes, Lady Liberty initially had to earn her keep in New York Harbor, but she didn't do a great job

LONG ANSWER If you were going to pick a giant statue to use as a lighthouse, it would be understandable if you went for the one of a woman holding up a torch high above her head. Yet the Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World, to give the New York landmark its full name, hadn't been designed for such a purpose and no provisions were made for it to be a navigational aid for ships in the harbour.

President Grover Cleveland only placed the statue under the administration of the Lighthouse Board on 16 November 1886, three weeks after its dedication ceremony – where its light was "more like a glowworm than a beacon," according to the *World* newspaper. The Board wasn't thrilled with being saddled with the resulting costs and maintenance, and engineers never properly succeeded in coming up with a way to make it an effective lighthouse – especially as its position on Bedloe's Island (now Liberty Island) meant it was too far inland.

Albert Littlefield was the first keeper, chosen due to his experience with electricity, and he would be the last. In 1901, after 15 years as a lighthouse, responsibility for the Statue of Liberty passed to the War Department.

DID YOU KNOW?

THAT'S A MORAY

Eels were a delicacy in ancient Rome so the rich and powerful kept ponds to ensure a ready supply. The statesman and orator, Lucius Licinius Crassus, however, kept a pet eel that he would dress in earrings and necklaces.

CONVERT COMEDY

Mathurine de Vallois was the court jester for French kings in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. An ardent Catholic, it was said that she was so funny that she could make Huguenots convert.

TUSK OR BUST

In 2003, the staff of a museum in Southend, Essex, were contacted by a pensioner who claimed to have found a 20,000-year-old mammoth tusk in his garden, only to discover that it was actually a Victorian drainage pipe.

PUTTING THE DIE IN DIET

A 48-year-old man named Basil Brown – not the Sutton Hoo archaeologist – died in 1974 after drinking a gallon of carrot juice every day and taking 70 million units of Vitamin A in 10 days.

How did Ivan the Terrible die?

SHORT ANSWER The Grim Reaper got the formidable first tsar of all Russia in checkmate

LONG ANSWER Ivan the Terrible passed away in 1584, at the age of 53. Surely, a man with a name like that died in battle or at the hands of his enemies? He had gone to war often against Poland and Sweden and transformed Russia into a powerful empire. As tsar, he had overseen a reign of terror against the boyars, or Russian aristocracy, so it wouldn't have been surprising if they turned on him.

If not a violent death, perhaps he finally succumbed to mental fatigue or stress after all that empire building? There's no question that Ivan was prone to a blood-pressure-rising temper; he had murdered his son and heir in a fit of rage, after all.

While all these options make sense, in reality Ivan managed to have a much more peaceful end. He suffered a stroke during a game of chess.

ENDGAME
The ruler is said to have died playing chess with his friend Bogdan Belsky

Why is John of Rila patron saint of pies?

SHORT ANSWER Pies are good, but are they THAT good?!

LONG ANSWER Bulgaria's patron saint, John of Rila, also has responsibility for pies and pie makers thanks to one of his miracles. Don't get excited: it was hardly the feeding of the 5,000. While the eighth- and ninth-century hermit monk lived in a mountain cave to lead an ascetic life of solitude and prayer, he just couldn't stop himself from helping people. One time, he visited a village and fed the poor with two pies that had been given to him by a local pie maker. That's it. Yet it was still enough for a sainthood and annual celebrations every 19 October.

CAT UP A DRAINPIPE
Panic over unusually agile thieves during the early 20th century led to a rise in people purchasing home security devices

Where does the term 'cat burglar' come from?

SHORT ANSWER In 1907, a newspaper came up with the purr-fect name for the 20th-century highwaymen

LONG ANSWER "Known, on account of his climbing ability, as the 'Cat Burglar', Arthur Edward Young pleaded guilty at Newington Sessions yesterday to several acts of burglary in Streatham," read the *London Daily News* in April 1907. That is the earliest-known use of the moggy-based moniker for a wall-scaling, rooftop-running thief.

Like the highwaymen of old, these death-defying criminals caught the public's imagination and even admiration, so the nickname given to Young soon came to be associated with all of them.

In the 1930s, Robert Delaney was dubbed 'king of the cat burglars' for his spate of thefts in which he'd clamber into Mayfair mansions and pinch jewellery. Such was the fascination with cat burglars during the 1920s and 30s that home security measures had to adapt. The Ideal Home Exhibition of 1925 featured 'cat-burglar-proof window catches' and designs were made for internal drainpipes to rob the thieves of potential footholds.

400
The size of the fine, in Australian dollars, issued by a local council to NASA for littering after the space station Skylab crashed on 11 July 1979 in Western Australia.

Who invented the perm?

SHORT ANSWER German hairdresser Karl Nessler was willing to make his wife a fashion victim

LONG ANSWER The French hairdresser Marcel Grateau first caught the wave by developing a long-lasting wavy hairstyle in the 1870s using heated curling tongs. But the perm tends to be credited to a German, Karl Nessler, and the help (and sacrifice) of his wife, Katharina.

On 8 October 1906, Nessler unveiled the permanent wave at his Oxford Street salon. All it needed was sodium hydroxide, a dozen brass rollers weighing a total of 10kg and heated to 100 degrees, a system of weights and pulleys to keep them touching the client/torture victim, and six hours. Oh, and several experiments on Katharina, which saw her hair completely burned off. Despite the time, the cumbersome equipment and the dangers, the perm was here to stay... permanently, you could say.

YOU'VE GOTTA ROLL WITH IT
The craze for curls spread thanks to German perm pioneer Karl Nessler

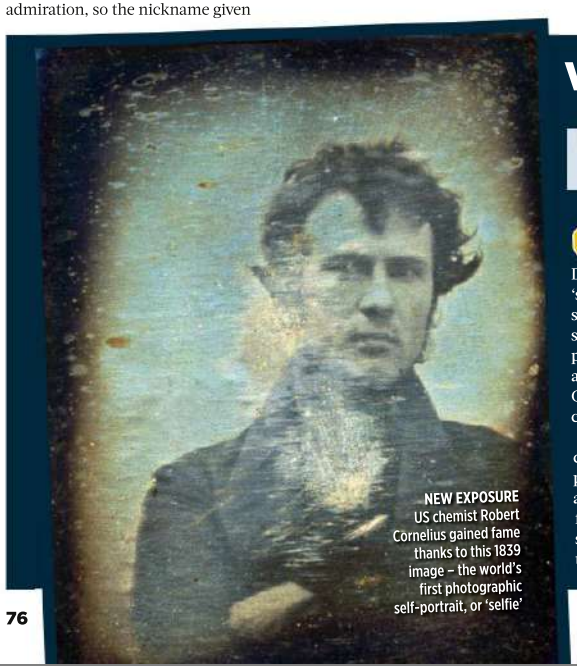
Who took the first selfie?

SHORT ANSWER Paris Hilton said she did. Tell that to Robert Cornelius...

LONG ANSWER The Oxford English Dictionary added the word 'selfie' in 2013, a few years after socialite Paris Hilton claimed she had invented the form of photographic self-portrait and around 175 years after Robert Cornelius took what is actually considered to be the first.

In 1839, the American chemist, who had a passion for pioneering photography, set up a box camera with a lens made from opera glasses at his family store in Philadelphia and, due to the long exposure time, was able to dash in front of the lens and take a daguerreotype of himself. This came only a year after the first person ever had been photographed – and that had been by accident.

For those out there, however, saying Cornelius didn't take a proper selfie as it should be done with a handheld camera, then Hilton still doesn't get a look in. The New York-based photographer Joseph Byron took photos of himself while determinedly lifting up his far-from-smartphone-sized camera in 1909.



NEW EXPOSURE
US chemist Robert Cornelius gained fame thanks to this 1839 image – the world's first photographic self-portrait, or 'selfie'

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3, AKG IMAGES X1

UNHAPPY FAMILIES
The connection between George V (*right*) and Wilhelm II (*left*) posed a problem during WWI

CON GONE WRONG
Konrad Kujau (*front right*) and co-defendant Gerd Heidemann (*rear left*) on trial for their scam in August 1984

Who wrote Hitler's diaries?

SHORT ANSWER Here's a hint: it was not Adolf Hitler

LONG ANSWER In 1983, the West German magazine *Stern* made the sensational announcement that they had possession of Adolf Hitler's diaries, 60 handwritten journals filled with the wartime thoughts of the führer himself. There was just one teeny problem: they were completely fake.

Stern paid nearly 10 million Deutsche Marks for the scoop and sold serialisation rights to other news outlets, but within two weeks the forgery was exposed. The entries were riddled with historical inaccuracies, the bindings aged with tea, the modern paper and ink hadn't been available during the war, and Hitler's signature didn't look right.

The diaries were the creation of German painter and prolific forger, Konrad Kujau. Posing as an antiques dealer named Herr Fischer, he claimed they had been salvaged from a plane crash at the end of the war. The experts brought in to authenticate the diaries, including British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, weren't given all the facts and too readily believed Kujau's claims. Everyone was left red-faced, to say the least, and Kujau and a *Stern* reporter, Gerd Heidemann, were arrested.

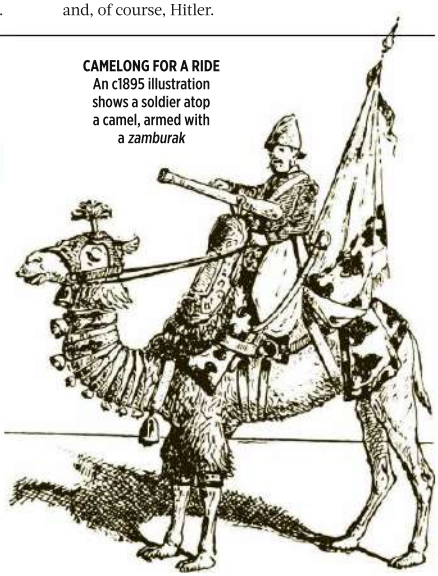
Kujau didn't seem to mind being uncovered, though. When released from prison, he opened a gallery of his forgeries of Dalí, Monet, Van Gogh and, of course, Hitler.

What was the zamburak?

SHORT ANSWER A special kind of animal artillery with a sting

LONG ANSWER In the Iranian empires of the 18th century, camels and guns were commonly used in warfare, so someone had the bright idea of putting the two together. The result was the *zamburak*, meaning 'wasp', a swivel gun mounted on a frame that sat on a camel's saddle.

The mobility of the animal and the 360-degree range of the gun made it surprisingly effective. *Zamburaks* helped the Pashtuns defeat a larger army at the battle of Gulnabad in 1722 and Nader Shah, founder of the Afsharid dynasty and Shah of Iran, kept an entire corps of the humped tanks.



CAMELONG FOR A RIDE
An c1895 illustration shows a soldier atop a camel, armed with a *zamburak*

Why are they called the Windsors?

SHORT ANSWER The king sharing a name with a World War I enemy bomber was a PR disaster

LONG ANSWER George V was cousin to Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, his wife had a German father, and he belonged to the uber-Teutonic-sounding House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, which went back to Queen Victoria's German husband, Albert. That the British monarchy had such close connections to their enemy in World War I didn't sit well with the public, and came to a head in 1917 amidst outrage at German air raids on London, including the bombing of a school that killed 18 children. The attack, coincidentally enough, had been carried out by a type of bomber called a Gotha.

The Royal Family decided a major facelift would help, so on 17 July they renounced all German titles and changed their name to Windsor. The king's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, suggested it as appropriately English and regal, having long been associated with the royal residence there. Other options considered were Tudor, Plantagenet, and the on-the-nose England.

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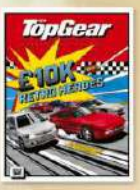

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ONE TO WATCH

Ridley Road sees Eddie Marsan, Agnes O'Casey and Danny Sykes (*left to right*) star as members of the 62 Group – an anti-fascist movement in London's East End

Fighting back

Ridley Road / Now streaming via BBC iPlayer

On 20 April 1962 Colin Jordan formed the National Socialist Movement (NSM), a splinter group of the original British National Party. The date was significant, selected by Jordan, who advocated "universal Nazism", because it was Adolf Hitler's birthday. But the fascists of the 1960s didn't go unopposed. Also founded in 1962 was the 62 Group, a coalition of anti-fascists based in London that took direct – and violent – action against the far right.

It's these events that drive the plot of *Ridley Road*, adapted from Jo Bloom's 2014 novel, and now available to watch in its entirety via BBC iPlayer.

At the centre of the story is Vivien Epstein, (played by newcomer Agnes O'Casey), a Jewish hairdresser from Manchester who escapes over-protective parents and the prospect of a loveless marriage, and heads for London. Here, she hopes to link up again with the man she really loves, Jack Morris (Tom Varey). He has, it turns out, been trying to infiltrate the NSM, another reflection of the real-life activities of anti-fascists in the 1960s.

In the capital, Epstein meets up with her uncle, gruff and tough Soly Malinovsky (Eddie Marsan in a terrific performance), and is drawn into the 62 Group. Soon, she too is working undercover, which brings her into the orbit of those who follow Colin Jordan, played with an eerie intensity by Rory Kinnear.

Playing out over four episodes, *Ridley Road*, named for a street in East London, makes the most of the tensions inherent in its set-up and convincingly evokes a capital where life is often more akin to the 1950s than the swinging years that lie ahead. The cast, which also includes Tracy-Ann Oberman as Soly's wife, Nancy, and Tamzin Outhwaite as Soho hair salon manager Barbara, is excellent. The script is by Sarah Solemani, perhaps best known for a scene-stealing turn as Miranda in *Bridget Jones's Baby*.

O'Casey's character, Vivien Epstein, goes undercover inside a neo-Nazi movement led by Colin Jordan (Rory Kinnear)

BBC PRODUCTIONS/BEN BLACKALL, KZ

Kristen Stewart's performance as the Princess of Wales is already being tipped for Oscars glory

Festive chill

Spencer / In cinemas from Friday 5 November

The marriage between Charles and Diana has grown cold. With rumours swirling publicly about affairs and even an impending divorce, there is little hope of rapprochement. Yet royal marriages cannot be allowed to end easily. So it is, in a film that describes itself as "a fable from a true tragedy", we are invited to watch what happens when the Princess of Wales visits the in-laws for Christmas. Will peace be declared?

What follows, as imagined by scriptwriter Steven Knight (*Peaky Blinders*) and Chilean director Pablo Larraín, is extraordinary. Here is a Diana (Kristen Stewart) who we are immediately shown as someone lost, literally unable to find her way to the Sandringham Estate and running late. Here is a Diana who, brittle and depressed, begins to see the ghost of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's doomed second wife.

As with *Jackie*, his drama about Jackie Kennedy's life in the aftermath of JFK's assassination, Larraín is clearly fascinated by the impossible demands made on his subject. But where at least Kennedy maintained some control over her fate – indeed, you can read Kennedy's later life as a study in triumphing over a destructive level of fame – we see Diana as someone trapped within Sandringham's chilly corridors. And someone constantly watched and assessed, too, not least by equerry Major Gregory (Timothy Spall).

Kristen Stewart captures the duality of Diana beautifully, the way she could somehow be both warm and yet stilted, as if scared to show her true feelings. If her life was anything like it is portrayed in *Spencer*, she had good reason to be guarded.

The cast list also includes Scottish actor Stella Gonet as Queen Elizabeth II

ALAMY X2, WAG ENTERTAINMENT X1, GETTY IMAGES X4

From tragedy to humour

Archive on 4: How America Learned to Laugh Again / BBC Radio 4, Saturday 30 October

Two decades ago, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, laughter was in short supply in the US. How could anyone make jokes following such an atrocity? But satirical newspaper *The Onion* soon broke ranks, publishing an article poking fun at the government's response to the attacks: "US Vows To Defeat Whoever It Is We Are At War With".

It's a moment that flags up the question of when is it *right* to make jokes after grim events? That's the dilemma explored here by satirist Joe Queenan, who also looks at the question as a way to think about contemporary America – a country currently wrestling with the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.

Partly built around Queenan's musings on what makes him laugh, the programme also features Ian Hislop, Armando Iannucci and former *Onion* editor Robert Siegel.

Unacknowledged history

Empire State of Mind / Channel 4, Saturday 13 November

Modern Britain is a place with far deeper roots in the age of empire than we often realise or even feel comfortable acknowledging. So argued Sathnam Sanghera earlier this year in *Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain*, a book that looked at how Britain's imperial past plays into our contemporary culture and politics, while at the same time considering why we so rarely discuss the fact that Britain once held sway over more than 400 million people around the world.

These themes also lie at the centre of the two-part *Empire & Me*, in which Sanghera travels around the country speaking to people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life, discussing with them how they think about empire.

"When I started thinking about this subject four years ago, the way imperialism has shaped modern Britain was an esoteric concern," noted Sanghera when the show was announced. "[But now] there's massive interest in the question of how colonialism influences us. It's an issue that seems to exercise and enrage politicians, teachers, academics, pundits, think-tanks, talk-show hosts and students all over the nation."

Might we, asks Sanghera, be able to come to terms with the past without shying away from troubling episodes in Britain's imperial history?

There's also a personal element to the films. In 1968, Sathnam Sanghera's family arrived in the Midlands as immigrants from India. This was the year when Wolverhampton's Conservative MP, Enoch Powell, gave his infamous "rivers of blood" speech, and a time when it was all too commonplace, for example, to find racist signs in local stores.

Sathnam Sanghera (*inset*) explores debates surrounding Britain's empire, and the legacy of politicians such as Enoch Powell (*above*)

Canterbury Cathedral, partly shrouded by scaffolding, features in a brand-new series airing on the Yesterday channel

Work in progress

Great British Landmark Fixers / Yesterday, November

Canterbury Cathedral is said to be as old as England. Founded in 597, it was completely rebuilt between 1070 and 1077, years when William the Conqueror was consolidating his control over the country. In 1170, it was the scene of one of the most famous crimes in the nation's history, when followers of King Henry II murdered Archbishop Thomas Becket.

It's therefore not surprising that the building is showing its age. However, as the first episode in a new series following the work of those who restore and maintain historic structures reveals, help is at hand, with the cathedral benefiting from a five-year, £25m project of works. This has been helping to resolve such alarming problems as stone falling from weather-worn windows, and the huge timbers holding up the cathedral's world-famous Christchurch Gate having been eaten away over time.

The six-part series continues with episodes focusing on Edinburgh's North Bridge, which links the Old Town and the New Town, the Royal Albert Hall, and the neo-Gothic splendour of Manchester's Town Hall.

A family divided

Mosley Must Fall / BBC Radio 4, Monday 15 November

On 4 October 1936, Oswald Mosley (*pictured*) led members of his British Union of Fascists (BUF) into the East End of London, an area with a large Jewish population. What followed was dubbed the battle of Cable Street, as protesters clashed with some of the thousands of police officers sent to protect the BUF marchers.

Mosley Must Fall, written by Martin McNamara, looks at events on the day from the perspective of an Irish family living in Whitechapel, a family whose loyalties to each other are about to be tested.

The exhibition will boast dozens of rare Peruvian treasures, including these gold alloy and shell ear plates, thought to date from around 800–550 BC

EXHIBITION

Peru: A Journey in Time

PAID ENTRY The British Museum, London, 11 November 2021 – 20 February 2022, *britishmuseum.org*

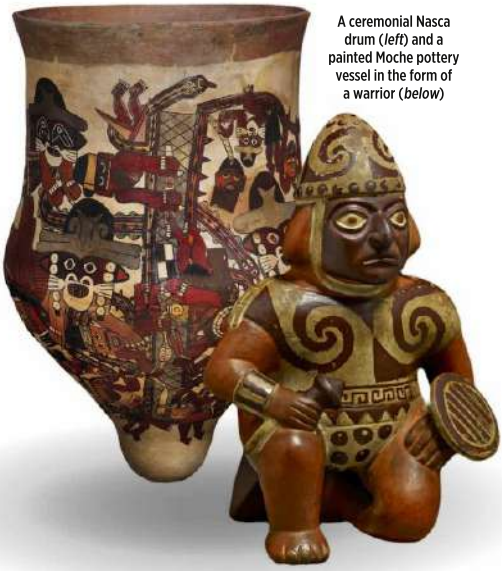
Throughout its long and storied history, the area that now forms modern Peru has been home to a wide variety of cultures and civilisations. As such, the South American country is famous for its rich archaeological treasures, including items dating back to the rule of the powerful Wari (AD 600–900) and Inca (AD 1400–1532) empires.

To mark 200 years since Peru gained independence from Spain, the Museo de Art de Lima has teamed up with the British Museum to host a new exhibition, enabling UK audiences to see dozens of rare Peruvian objects for the first time.

Running until February, highlights will include a 2,500-year-old headdress found at the site of an elite burial, a colourful textile fragment decorated with embroidered hummingbirds, and a ceremonial drum bearing images of enemies being captured during combat.

The oldest artefact on show, however, will be a drinking vessel thought to date from around 1200 BC, created by the Cupisnique culture – an indigenous group from Peru's northern Pacific coast.

Along the way visitors will also be able to discover how the inhabitants of the Andes have managed to adapt to the region's tough environment, and learn how the long-lost Chavín, Paracas and Nasca peoples have contributed to Peru's modern-day identity.



A ceremonial Nasca drum (*left*) and a painted Moche pottery vessel in the form of a warrior (*below*)

THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM X3, ASHMOLEAN X2, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, ALAMY, GETTY, WIENER HOLOCAUST LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

A 19th-century 'death mask' of Dante (*below*) and an artwork by Geoff MacEwan, inspired by the poet's descriptions of the Earthly Paradise (*left*)

EXHIBITION

Dante: The Invention of Celebrity

FREE ENTRY Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, until 9 January 2022, *ashmolean.org*

It might be safe to assume that the notion of celebrity is a modern phenomenon, but the Florentine poet and philosopher Dante Alighieri (c1265–1321) was writing about the perils of fame and corruption as far back as the 14th century. This new exhibition, hosted to mark the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, focuses on his classic work *The Divine Comedy*, and how its outstanding success made him – perhaps ironically – into a literary icon. Along the way, visitors will be able to explore the poet's legacy today, and view a selection of Dante-inspired artefacts and artworks. Although access to the exhibition is free, a timed ticket to the Ashmolean is required.

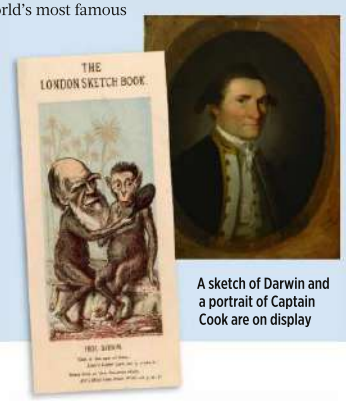
EXHIBITION

100 Journeys: National Portrait Gallery loans

FREE ENTRY The Box, Plymouth, until 6 March 2022, *theboxplymouth.com*

Until spring next year, visitors to Plymouth's new £47m museum – The Box – can view a fascinating selection of paintings on loan from the National Portrait Gallery. Displayed inside the museum's 100 Journeys gallery, which highlights Plymouth's role in some of the world's most famous voyages and expeditions, the artworks include depictions of Captain James Cook, Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles Darwin, Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Ralegh, some of which have not been on show for several years.

To put the portraits in their historical context, they are displayed alongside artefacts from The Box's own collections, including Darwin's sextant from the *Beagle* and archival material relating to Plymouth's anti-slavery movement.



A sketch of Darwin and a portrait of Captain Cook are on display

EXHIBITION

This Fascist Life: Radical Right Movements in Interwar Europe

FREE ENTRY The Wiener Holocaust Library, London, until 4 February 2022, *wienerholocaustlibrary.org*

A British Union of Fascists supporter in the 1930s

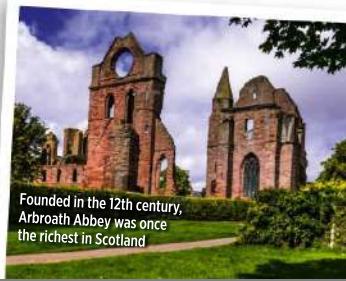
As Europe recovered from the horrors of World War I, many countries became fertile breeding grounds for fascism. Within a few years of the Armistice, a whole host of far-right movements and political parties had sprung up across the continent, all espousing the same ultra-nationalist rhetoric. In partnership with the European Fascist Movements 1918–1941 project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, this free exhibition reveals how the ideology managed to spread so rapidly, using posters, flyers, newspapers and photographs drawn from The Wiener Holocaust Library collections. It also looks at what fascist groups did to achieve their aims, and how they attempted to reshape society in Italy, Germany, Austria and elsewhere.

PERMANENT EXHIBITION

The Declaration of Arbroath

PAID ENTRY Arbroath Abbey, Angus, *historicenvironment.scot*

In 1320, the nobles of Scotland wrote a letter to Pope John XXII, asking him to recognise Robert the Bruce as the legitimate king of the Scots. Known as the Declaration of Arbroath, it has made Arbroath Abbey – where the letter was allegedly written – a popular tourist destination. To mark the 700th anniversary of the declaration (albeit a year late, due to Covid-19), a new exhibition has opened at the abbey's visitor centre, featuring a commemorative tapestry made by local embroiderers. Please note, however, that the abbey and its grounds are currently closed due conservation works.



Founded in the 12th century, Arbroath Abbey was once the richest in Scotland

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Adventures in Time: The First World War

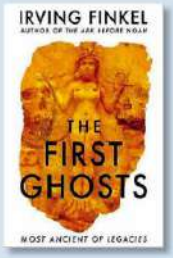
By Dominic Sandbrook
Particular Books, £14.99, hardback, 176 pages

Author and broadcaster Dominic Sandbrook has been busy penning more books in his ongoing *Adventures in Time* series, which offer accessible retellings of key moments in history for a younger audience (and, no doubt, older readers too). This instalment distils the complexities of World War I into a succinct, vivid account, which never loses sight of either the heroism or the horrors. Another title profiles Alexander the Great, with more books expected early on in 2022.

The First Ghosts: Most Ancient of Legacies

By Irving Finkel
Hodder & Stoughton, £25, hardback, 368 pages

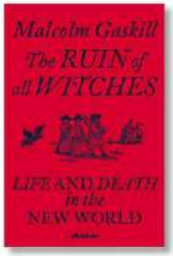
Whatever you think of ghosts – eerily plausible phenomena or myths that need busting – there's no doubt that stories of these spectral apparitions have haunted humanity for centuries. Here British Museum expert Irving Finkel looks back to ancient Mesopotamia – land of the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians – in a bid to trace the very earliest recorded tales of such spirits. It's enthralling stuff, mixing the scholarly with the accessible and placing storytelling right at the heart of the human experience.



Fabric: The Hidden History of the Material World

By Victoria Finlay
Profile Books, £25, hardback, 528 pages

Among the more minor impacts of the coronavirus pandemic has been the shift in people's daily wardrobe: the much-documented move towards loungewear and, yes, elasticated waistbands. It's one example of how clothes and fabric can tell us something about wider society, and this book looks back at our longer relationship with the material world. From the communities upholding centuries of tradition by transforming natural products into cloth, to the symbolism associated with particular ways of dressing, it's a vibrant blend of social and cultural history.



The Ruin of All Witches: Life and Death in the New World

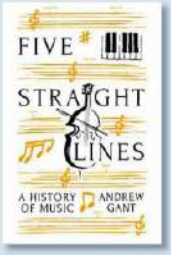
By Malcolm Gaskill
Allen Lane, £20, hardback, 336 pages

America, 1651. Far from home, in a frontier land of unknown dangers, members of a community of English settlers are having bad dreams. When cattle begin falling sick, and children start dying, suspicion falls on a young couple. What dark forces have they conjured to do their evil bidding? As paranoia leads to persecution, things begin to fall apart. This is a compelling study of a society at the nexus of competing forces: Enlightenment and superstition, the New World and ancient terrors.

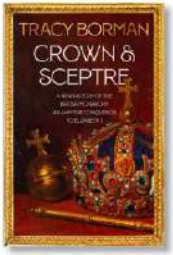
Five Straight Lines: A History of Music

By Andrew Gant
Profile Books, £30, hardback, 656 pages

From bone flutes to brass bands, symphonies to streaming, this lively book charts the ways in which music has provided the soundtrack to centuries of human history. There's certainly a lot of content to pack in, but composer and writer Andrew Gant is a masterful guide, skilfully exploring the unexpected connections across those centuries. History may not repeat itself, as the saying goes, but it does often rhyme.



This is a great introduction to the major players and motifs of a fascinating subject.



Crown & Sceptre: A New History of the British Monarchy from William the Conqueror to Elizabeth II

By Tracy Borman
Hodder & Stoughton, £25, hardback, 576 pages

Next year will mark the Queen's 70th year on the throne. That impending anniversary provides the perfect opportunity to look back at the monarchy as it has evolved over almost a thousand years, from William the Conqueror via Plantagenet, Tudor and Hanover. What factors have contributed to its longevity? How has it shaped today's world? And what might the institution look like a generation from now?

PODCAST WHAT TO LISTEN TO...

Each month we bring you three of our favourite podcasts from the BBC and HistoryExtra...

This Union: The Ghost Kingdoms of England

bit.ly/UnionPod101

This four-part series sees Ian Hislop set off on a journey around four great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – East Anglia, Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex – to uncover their cultures and identities. With help from top historians, Hislop charts the process via which these disparate communities came together to form the nation of England.

Everything You Wanted to Know: Spanish Armada

bit.ly/ArmadaPod101

The battle between the Spanish Armada and Elizabeth I's fleet in 1588 is one of the most famous moments in English history. But how much of what we think we know about the maritime clash is actually true? Robert Hutchinson answers some of the biggest questions, tackling reader queries and popular internet searches alike.

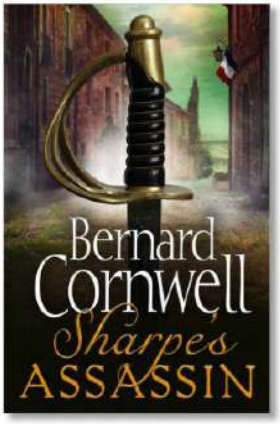
You're Dead to Me: Ramesses the Great

bit.ly/RamessesPod101

Greg Jenner is one of the hardest-working historians in the business: when he's not writing books, he's chatting to guests on his podcast. This episode sees Dr Campbell Price and comedian Sophie Duker discuss Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II. Was he really as 'great' as his sobriquet suggests? And just how far did he go to prove his divinity – and virility?

GETTY IMAGES X1

HISTORICAL FICTION...



Sharpe's Assassin

By Bernard Cornwell
HarperCollins, £20, hardback

More than 15 years after his previous entry in the series, Bernard Cornwell has returned with a new tale about his Napoleonic Wars hero, Richard Sharpe. The roguish soldier, who was first introduced in the 1981 novel *Sharpe's Eagle*, has now risen through the ranks of the British Army and finds himself in Paris after the battle of Waterloo. Napoleon's men may have been defeated, but Sharpe is tasked with carrying out a dangerous new mission, ordered by none other than the Duke of Wellington himself.

Excerpt

It is June 1815, days after the battle of Waterloo, and Richard Sharpe is summoned to the Duke of Wellington. One battle may be over, but the war is not yet won – and Sharpe is ordered to lead his battalion on a vital mission...

'March hard and fight fast, Sharpe. Don't let me down.'

'Of course not, my lord.'

'Show Colonel Sharpe out, Burrell.'

The Captain escorted Sharpe to the front door where Harper waited and where he offered to shake hands. 'I wish I were going with you, Colonel.'

'It's a fool's errand,' Sharpe said, but shook Burrell's offered hand. 'Hotel Vlezenbeek, four thirty.'

'I'll tell Major Vincent, sir.'

Burrell watched the Rifleman mount his captured horse, then returned to the library where the Duke was standing at the street window, evidently watching Sharpe.

'He's a remarkable looking fellow, don't you think, Burrell?'

'To quote you, Your Grace, I don't know what he does to the enemy, but by God he frightens me.'

'Ha!' the Duke said without a trace of amusement. 'Did he make any comment?'

'He said it was a fool's errand, Your Grace.'

'And so it is, Burrell, so it is. But Sharpe's no fool. He's a rogue, a damned rogue, but he's my rogue. He also has the devil's own luck and he wins his fights. And pray God he wins this one, otherwise...' The Duke's voice trailed away, because the alternative was unthinkable.

FELIX CLAY X1

Q&A

Bernard Cornwell

One of Britain's best-loved writers of historical fiction, Bernard Cornwell has written more than 50 books. His *Sharpe* novels, as well as his Saxon series *The Last Kingdom*, have both been made into hugely successful television shows. Cornwell lives with his wife in the US.

How does it feel returning to Sharpe?
Like reuniting with an old friend. I lived with Sharpe for the best part of 20 years and he never left my mind. If I was walking the dog I could hear him grumbling somewhere in my thoughts, so it was a pleasure to let him out again.

Why did you decide now to pick up Sharpe's story?
I'd long had the ambition to write another Sharpe novel and, with Uhtred [the protagonist in Cornwell's *The Last Kingdom*] finished, it seemed a good time to wake Sharpe from his long sleep. And writing my non-fiction account of Waterloo in 2014 had sharpened a desire to be in Sharpe's company again.

Where do we find him in *Sharpe's Assassin*?
He's in Paris, which is newly captured by the allies – primarily the British and the Prussians. I was fascinated by the assassination attempts made on the Duke of Wellington's life following the occupation.

How do you keep battle scenes exciting?
Battles, by their very nature, are exciting, so I don't have to work too hard to keep that excitement. And once Sharpe is in battle, it's almost a cinematic technique, cutting from a wide-angle point of view to an intense close-up that involves describing what Sharpe sees, smells, feels and thinks.

How challenging was it to jump from Uhtred's 10th century to Sharpe in the 19th century?
I can't say it was challenging at all, maybe because Sharpe really has been in my mind for so long and I merely had to pull him out of the mental drawer and let him loose again.

Why do you think Richard Sharpe is such an enduring character?
I think because he's a rogue, but he's a rogue on our side. Most people are aggravated by authority, whether it's a boss or the taxman or whatever, and wish they could treat that irritating authority with an impudent contempt. Sharpe does it for them. He's also very fond of women, and women seem to like him for that. And it didn't hurt that Sean Bean played him so brilliantly in the TV series!

Can we expect more from Sharpe in the future?
I wish I knew! I would like to write another two or three Sharpe stories, but I haven't thought about it much. I suspect at least one will get written.

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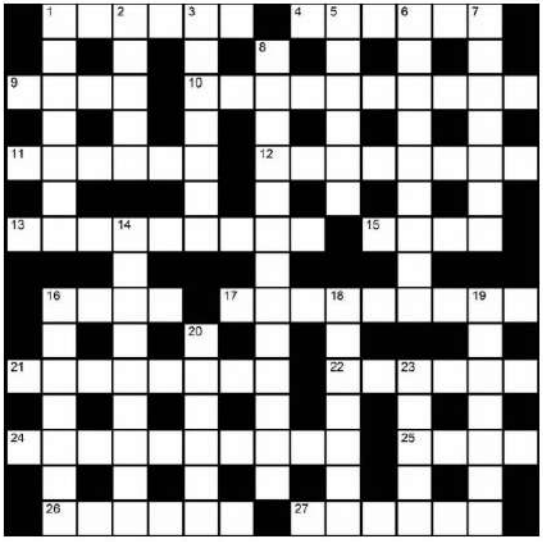
ACROSS

1 Nereid in Greek myth; mother of Timothy in the New Testament (6)
4 British Army slang for a soldier below regulation height (6)
9 ___ Spring, series of protests and uprisings in the Middle East in the early 2010s (4)
10 Franklin Delano and Eleanor, for example (10)
11 Historic West Yorkshire mill town (6)
12 Colloquial term for a 20-franc gold coin (8)
13 French city formerly known for the manufacture of arms and ribbons (2–7)
15 Minced oath (4)
16 Russian ruler, historically (4)
17 Character in Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831) (9)
21 Royalist, in the English Civil Wars (8)
22 Border city in Texas (2,4)
24 Country known as East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 (10)
25 Joe ___ (b1990), Yorkshire and England cricketer (4)
26 Philip ___ (1922–1985), English poet and librarian (6)
27 In ritual, to mark or smear a person with sacred oil (6)

DOWN

1 Amelia ___ (b1897), US aviator (7)
2 Alfred ___ (1833–96), Swedish chemist and philanthropist (5)
3 Jane Welsh ___ (1801–66), Scottish letter-writer (7)
5 Ancient city of Syria (6)
6 1947 Albert Camus novel, titled *La Peste* in French (3,6)
7 Unity, Nancy or Jessica, perhaps (7)
8 London thoroughfare, notable for ministerial residences (7,6)
14 1805 naval battle (9)
16 Marc ___ (1887–1985), Russian-French artist (7)
18 1872 satirical novel by Samuel Butler (7)
19 Submarine-set 1981 war film (3,4)
20 Capital of Rwanda since independence in 1962 (6)
23 Term for a Zoroastrian in India (5)



Set by Richard Smyth

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SOLUTION Nº 99

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NEXT ISSUE

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Discover the power and influence of the Church in medieval England – from the perils of holy pilgrimage, to saints and sinners and avoiding a stint in Purgatory

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The three lucky winners of the crossword from issue 98 are:

CM Cooksey, West Midlands
S Needham, West Yorkshire
J Sclanders, Lincolnshire

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *Pirates: Fact & Fiction.*

Please note, due to Covid-19, we will be unable to post your prize until we are working in the office once more. Please bear with us!

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THANKSGIVING AT THE FRONT 1944

While it might not have been the hearty meal they were used to, a pair of American soldiers enjoy a makeshift Thanksgiving dinner on the German border during the latter stages of World War II. Although supplies were precious, the US government did its best to ensure that troops were still able to mark the annual tradition, shipping out so many turkeys to the front that they became difficult to obtain back home. And the men had extra reason to celebrate, too – following the Normandy landings in June and the liberation of Paris in August, the tide against Germany was now turning. Before long, the eastern and western Allies would be racing towards Berlin, where Adolf Hitler would meet his end.

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